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TWO LILIES.

A NOVEL.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF "NATHALIE," "ADELE," "JOHN DORRIEN," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
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TWO LILIES.

CHAPTER I.

A DRIZZLING rain fell and made the pavement of the Strand dark and slippery; the gaslights burned redly in the fog that came from the river; the September evening wore a most unfriendly aspect, yet Edward Graham walked briskly with his hands in his pockets, whistling softly to himself as pleased as a schoolboy out on a holiday. He had just received the quarterly amount of his one hundred a year, and of these twenty-five pounds, which had not been an hour in his possession, he was going to spend ten on the purchase of a book. A rare book was this, a wonderful book, not to be found in the British Museum, and which, though modern, was a scarce book, of which only a few privileged beings could say, "It is mine." Edward Graham had spent a year in hunting for it. He had discovered a copy of it six months before this day in the shop of Mr. Clement, the well-known bookseller's shop in the Strand, but, notwithstanding his eager longing for that treasure, he had not been able to secure it yet. It was still that something to long for which is both the torment and the privilege of youth. It was so expensive! Ten pounds is a large sum when your income is only one hundred a year and you can add no more than thirty or forty pounds to it by your profession; moreover, the thirty-six pounds ten shillings and sixpence which architecture had brought in to Edward Graham within the last twelve months were not yet in his pocket, and the ten pounds which he was going to invest in the book in Mr. Clement's shop did not merely represent a large amount of self-denial in the way of

cigars and omnibuses, but also, and especially, the total loss of that yearly September holiday which is so dear to a true Londoner's heart. For all this Edward Graham cared naught, if he could only secure the prize he so coveted. But could he secure it? He knew that the book was there the day before this. He had seen it. With his own eyes he had read for the hundred and fiftieth time the title:

De Renneville,

Anciennes Maisons de la ville de Saint Aubin en Normandie,

printed in Gothic characters of yellow gold on the brown morocco binding of the thick quarto. But what if some other covetous amateur, some other ambitious young architect, anxious to renovate the domestic architecture of England, and to win unto himself golden opinions and golden rewards by going to the fountain-head of fine old Norman art, had caught sight of the volume this morning as he went down the Strand, entered Mr. Clement's shop, and bought it out forthwith! Edward Graham's heart fell at the thought. That would be a blow, indeed, and, so far as the book was concerned, he did not hope to recover it. It was a wonderful chance to have seen the book at all, and two wonderful chances do not occur in a lifetime. He could not indulge in the vision of running over to Paris and reading De Renneville there in the National Library. It had been the whim of a rich man, it was printed for private circulation only, and was as inaccessible to the general public as are a lady's pearls and diamonds. No; if the book was gone, there was no remedy for it. Edward Graham had seen it once for half an hour on the table of Sir Edmund Shrievewell, but every one knew that the great architect was the closest and stingiest of mortals in imparting knowledge. Sir Edmund was the man of all others to keep De Renneville in his library safe under lock and key forever.

"No," thought Edward Graham, with his hand on the door of Mr. Clement's shop, "if it is gone, I must think no more about it; I must forget it as if I had never seen it, or the book will only set me astray, and, instead of working or thinking for myself, I shall always be dreaming of what I could have done if I had had it; just like poor Long, who

never recovered the loss of his thousand pounds. 'If I had that thousand pounds, you know, I could do this or that,' and so, instead of setting himself to earn a thousand pounds like a man and letting by-gones be by-gones, he took to drinking."

"And is that Edward Graham?" said a cheery voice behind the young architect, while a hand was placed with careless familiarity on his shoulder.

Mr. Graham turned round rather sharply. He was a sensitive man, also a proud one. Familiarity, under any aspect, was odious to him. Moreover, he entertained a special dislike for the owner of that cheery voice; so, as we said, he turned round rather sharply, and, though his manner was courteous, it was decidedly cool, as he replied:

"How do you do, Cowper?"

"Oh! excellently well, of course. I am going off to Gaul by the tidal boat. Will you join me?"

"Are you going now?"

"This moment."

"Why, where is your luggage?"

"Confound the luggage!" replied Mr. Cowper, with gay heartiness. "I send it off to the station beforehand, and never set my eyes on it again till it has passed through the custom-house."

Mr. Cowper's appearance did not belie the easy philosophy implied by this declaration. He was a gentlemanlike-looking young man, with a debonair manner which few people could resist. Of these few Edward Graham was one. That beaming countenance and pleasant voice both inspired him with a sort of superstitious horror. A large share of Italian blood flowed in his veins, and he had an Italian's secret belief in and abhorrence of the evil-eye. That gay-looking, fair-haired, blue-eyed Mr. Cowper, who now stood before him, detaining him, at the door of Mr. Clement's shop, with his hand impatiently stretched out to open it, had played the part of Gettatore in Edward Graham's life. Whenever they had met, trouble had infallibly been at hand, and with involuntary nervousness the young architect now thought: "Cowper has turned up, the book is sure to be gone."

"And where do you perch now?" asked Mr. Cowper, with that total want of ceremony which characterized his address. "In the old tree at Chelsea?"

"I still live in the same place," coldly answered Edward Graham.

The words were scarcely uttered when Mr. Cowper hailed an empty hansom cab passing by, and, jumping into it with a careless "*Au revoir*, old fellow," vanished in a moment.

With a sigh of relief, Edward Graham entered the shop. A look told him that the book, his book, was still there.

"Good-evening, Mr. Clement," he said, addressing a neat little man, who stood as straight as a Chinese figure behind the counter. "Have you still got De Renneville?"

Mr. Clement was somewhat tired of the question, which, under various insidious forms, this young man had been putting to him for the last six months, so it was rather shortly that he replied:

"Yes, sir, I have got De Renneville."

"May I look at it?"

Mr. Clement took down the quarto and placed it on the counter without uttering a word.

With sparkling eyes and eager hand, Edward Graham opened the volume. He looked at the frontispiece, counted the plates with scrupulous attention, closed the book, examined the binding, then, putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a little bundle of five-pound notes, and, placing two on the counter, he said, with seeming composure:

"I believe that is your price, Mr. Clement?"

"Yes, sir, it is," answered Mr. Clement, somewhat surprised at this unexpected conclusion. "Won't you have the book sent, sir?"

"Thank you, there is no need," replied Edward Graham, and he walked out of the shop with the long-coveted volume under his arm, in all the triumphant exultation of a desire fulfilled.

Philosophers may preach and practise (but they do not), they may say what they please about the wisdom of indifference to all mere mortal pleasures, there is nothing in this world like wishing, and getting the thing wished for. The longing may be painful and wearisome, the joy when won may not last, but to wish is to live, spite the doom of death hanging over us, and to win is the one glimpse of Paradise that was left to man after his bitter loss.

When Edward Graham reached Chelsea, entered his bachelor's front parlor, where a bright coal fire was burning

in the grate, and the tea-tray was waiting for him on the table; when he drew his arm-chair in front of the hearth, and, sinking down into it, opened his book with the greed of a miser counting his gold, he uttered aloud an emphatic "At last!" which came from the depths of his heart.

At first Mr. Graham's countenance, as he bent over the open book on his knee, expressed only the triumphant gladness of a man who has just achieved a long-cherished purpose, but gradually that meaning faded away; his hand no longer turned over page after page in eager haste, but lingered over one for ten minutes at a time and more, and the most entire meditations and the closest attention were written in the strong lines of his Italian face. It was thoroughly Italian in complexion and character, and it had the noble though rather heavy Roman type. Edward Graham was the son of a lovely Italian girl whom a Scotch gentleman of ancient descent, but scanty means, had married for her delicate beauty. This she had not transmitted to the young man. He was tall, more strongly built than are most men of twenty-five, and not handsome, but from some Roman ancestor or other of his he had certainly derived the aquiline cast of his features, the ease and dignity of his carriage, and that impressive gravity of aspect which made even those who passed him by in the street feel that he was a remarkable-looking man.

The inner man did not belie the outward one in Edward Graham. The patience of great strength, mental and physical, its careless dignity and quiet fortitude, were his. He had also the steady ambition of those old Romans who set no other limits to the power of their race than those of the world, and who, while living for their own generation, yet labored for eternity. Solidity was his characteristic; his very imagination was subordinate to this great law of his nature. It was warm and powerful, but was rarely allowed to lead its master astray. He never undertook what he could not accomplish, and he neither over- nor underrated his power of accomplishing it. Thus the simplest things which he did were well done, and everything that he aimed at was worth the effort he made to attain it. Mr. Edward Graham was very careful of his money, perhaps because his father was a Scotchman, and that blood is strong, perhaps also because he was honorable and poor; but he had spent ten

pounds ungrudgingly and deliberately on the book now in his hands, and, even though that purchase should never bring him in the return of one shilling in his professional career, he was not the man to regret it.

He was an architect, a poor, unknown architect as yet, but he had determined that to renovate, so far as this may lie in one man's power, the domestic architecture of England should be the object of his ambition; and for the last five years every moment of his leisure, every shilling he could spare, had been devoted steadily and patiently to that aim. He had traveled in every direction sixty miles around London searching for and studying ancient mansions. He had found them in the spots where they still linger—some on the banks of quiet streams that glide by them with a low murmur like the song of Time; others embosomed in the green shade of ancestral trees and dreaming life away there like the sleeping beauty in the wood; others, again, rising quaint, tall, and strong, with meaner dwellings clustered around them, dwellings of mushroom growth, that had come there as if for shelter and protection. And how well he knew them, these old mediæval abbeys, with their quiet cloisters, these Elizabethan abodes of red brick embrowned by time, these bare-looking but roomy old houses of the days of Queen Anne, with their formal Dutch gardens—how he had visited and studied them all! Books and prints had made him almost equally familiar with habitations more remote, and he had spent days in the reading-room of the British Museum, to master in all its minutiæ the external aspect and internal economy of a dwelling he never expected to see. The same amount of study and time he had bestowed, so far as in his power lay, on foreign domestic architecture, old and modern. He knew every celebrated house of Pompeii by heart. He preferred that of Pansa to the house of Diomedes, and the house of the Faun he liked best of all. With grand old Roman palaces and stately French châteaux and hôtels he also had acquaintance, though more remote; and of all the valuable information thus acquired, not one-tenth he knew would ever avail him. It mattered very little to Edward Graham; for that one-tenth he was willing to toil, and would have scorned himself could he have grudged the cost.

The volume now lying on his knee was the very book for a man of such a temper. It gave a clear and plain account

of every habitation of wood and stone which time had spared in that most Norman of Norman towns, Saint Aubin. The old fourteenth and fifteenth century houses of wood, with their projecting fronts, gable ends, and carved beams, were considered at full length. The grave, stone mansions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were no less minutely described; and there was a whole chapter, with numerous illustrations, upon the vanes which still decorated the roofs of these ancient dwellings.

Now, Mr. Graham had a special weakness for vanes, and his mind fired to see those of Saint Aubin, as represented in the series of plates before him. These vanes in no manner resembled the straight, stiff gilt rods we see nowadays. One was in the shape of a sword-like spike tapering gently out of the roof. Four laughing heads peeped out from between graceful scrolls; bell-like flowers, with their leaves, drooped from the blade of the sword, the tips of which closed with acanthus-looking foliage. Another vane, evidently not mediæval, showed cupids and vases of flowers in alternate rows; and a third, a straight, tall stem, only bore pine cones on its branches. But, fascinating though these vanes were, what were they to the Hôtel de Saint Aubin, the gem of the town and of the book, as it appeared in three large plates! The first plate gave a view of the court, round which the hotel, an elegant little structure, was built. Only one of the two octagonal turrets which had formerly flanked it remained, but this was covered with *bassi-rilievi* representing rural scenes, to a separate representation of which, as well as of other *bassi-rilievi* on a low gallery enclosing one side of the court, the two other plates were devoted. The sculptured ornaments of that gallery were remarkable, and they interested Edward Graham very deeply. They represented the meeting of Henry VIII. of England and of Francis I. of France, as they were proceeding to the great pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

The English came out of Guines, the French from Ardres. A pompous cavalcade of prelates, cross-bearers, pages, and esquires followed each monarch. The two kings met in the centre.

"Ay, there are Henry's leopards on the housings of his charger," thought Edward Graham, "and these are the lilies of Francis."

So wrapt was Mr. Graham in the contemplation of this by-gone pageantry that he never heard a double knock at the street-door which the sound of a car passing by helped to drown. He roused himself, however, with a start as the door of his front parlor suddenly opened, and a foolish-looking, untidy maid-servant put in her head, and said, with a startled look:

"Oh! please, sir, there's a gentleman!"

And she spoke in a tone which implied that evening visitors were not frequently seen in Mr. Graham's front parlor.

"Never mind showing me in, my good girl," said a cheerful voice; and, gently pushing her aside, Mr. Cowper entered the room, and laughed gayly at Edward Graham's look of surprise.

CHAPTER II.

"You certainly did not expect to see me, did you, now?" remarked Mr. Cowper, as he came forward.

"You missed the train," replied Edward Graham, closing his book with a smile.

"My dear fellow," airily answered Mr. Cowper, sinking down into a chair by the fire. "You speak with a sagacity which the divine Ulysses might envy—only you are wrong. The train is in fault—not I. There has been an accident, and I cannot leave before to-morrow morning. So I have come round to you in the hope of persuading you into accompanying me. I suppose that shake of the head means 'No.' My dear Graham, allow me to prove to you that your obstinacy is most deplorable. Ever since swallows established the fundamental law of migration, man has, in a greater or less degree, followed the example set by these intelligent birds. Savages go from one hunting-ground or from one island to another, as they happen to be continental or insular savages; and civilized man has his excursion-trains, which run at certain times of the year, according to custom and climate. Now, the French coast is a very favorite hunting-ground with the real Londoner; only he *will* colonize, which is a pity. But, spite that drawback, I consider Saint Aubin as pleasant a little town as you—"

"Saint Aubin!" interrupted Edward Graham, with involuntary surprise; "it is there you are going?"

"To the very place," answered Mr. Cowper, with unmoved composure. "I have an uncle there, and I am going to pay him a flying visit."

Edward Graham had known Mr. Cowper all his life, but he had never known before this moment that Mr. Cowper had an uncle in or out of France. He looked delightfully open, charmingly frank and easy, but new traits in his history were always coming out after this sudden fashion, startling even the most unobservant among his intimate friends into the unpleasant conviction that they knew little or nothing about Mr. Cowper after all.

"Do you know this?" asked Edward Graham, pushing De Renneville's volume toward him.

"Oh, yes, quite well," replied Mr. Cowper, merely glancing at the book, then looking once more at the fire; "the author kindly gave me a copy—I fancy, by the way, that I left it at my uncle's—he is dead, poor fellow. He was a shy little man—rather a clever book, is it not?"

"Very clever, and especially suggestive," replied Mr. Graham, giving the fire a thrust of the poker which, if translated into speech, would have run thus: "That fellow knows every one and everything, and has every luck in life, I do believe. Perhaps I ought to have gone to Saint Aubin and not bought De Renneville—but, no, that would not have done. Saint Aubin must be for next year."

"Oh! very suggestive, of course," rejoined Mr. Cowper, in his airy, fluent way; "full of meaning to you, especially, I should say; but then there is a meaning in everything, if we but knew it. There was a meaning even in the famous gray coat which Napoleon wore at Austerlitz. It was chosen gray, I believe, that the dust and smoke of battle might not tell upon it. I remember liking De Renneville's book. I wonder you do not run over just to look at Mr. Bertram's house. It is the great show-place of Saint Aubin, and quite the thing for you."

"I suppose you mean the Hôtel de Saint Aubin, with a turret and *bassi-rilievi*, all about the Field of the Cloth of Gold," said Edward Graham, his black eyes sparkling with animation.

"Yes; the very same. Mr. Bertram is rather weak

about that Field of the Cloth of Gold. It seems that one of his ancestors figures in King Henry's suite, and, for so perfect a gentleman as he is, he talks rather more of that circumstance than is needful."

"Is the place his?" asked Mr. Graham, still eager and interested.

"No; it belongs, in point of fact, to his little girl. Her great-grandfather was French, a fisherman, or a drysalter, or something of the kind, who bought the place for a song in the great Revolution. His son, Mr. Bertram's father-in-law, appointed my uncle her guardian, but her father lives in the house, of course. It is anything but a convenient one within, however charming it may be without. Mr. Bertram raves about it, however; but then, being the last of the Bertrams, I suppose he has a right to rave about these old-fashioned things."

"Why, who are the Bertrams?" asked Edward Graham, throwing back his head in half real, half scornful surprise.

"What! You never heard of the Bertrams—the Gerald or Geraldine Bertrams, one of the great, old, old English Catholic families! My dear Graham, even the little barefooted boys who run about Saint Aubin, worrying one for sous, know all about the Bertrams. The late Mr. Bertram died there, and was buried in the famous old abbey outside Saint Aubin, and his son was reared in Saint Aubin, and married one of the Saint Aubin girls, and is one of the magnates of the place, and undoubtedly the acknowledged head of the English colony, by whom he is all but worshiped, partly because he is one of the handsomest of men, and partly because he is one of that aristocracy which John Bull adores, as only John Bull can adore when he sets about it. So, now, have I tempted you to go to Saint Aubin?"

"No," almost shortly replied Edward Graham. It was hard not to be able to afford going to the place he most longed to visit, and to see that easy, good-for-nothing Richard Cowper, who lived no one knew how, doing it without effort, was still harder; but to be asked to allow himself to be tempted was not endurable.

"I never saw such an inexorable fellow," said Mr. Cowper, gayly; "that 'no' was uttered with a sternness worthy of your Roman ancestors, Graham, and yet Miss Lily Scot, the belle of the English colony of Saint Aubin, is a sort of

connection of yours. I am sure I have heard her talk of a godmother of hers, who must be your aunt Mrs. Graham."

"My aunt's god-daughter does reside in Saint Aubin," quietly replied Edward Graham; "but my aunt has never seen her, nor has she been there."

"Ergo, you will not go; your logic is unanswerable."

Mr. Cowper looked very much amused, and Mr. Graham felt proportionately irritated. A hundred times before these two men had been on the extreme verge of a breach which the strong aversion on Mr. Graham's side would have rendered irreparable, slight though the motive which might have caused it always was, but every time something or some one had prevented the catastrophe. The *Deus ex machinâ* now came under the shape of a loud and very peculiar double-knock.

"A visitor for you, of course," remarked Mr. Cowper, with his easy smile.

Yes, it was a visitor for Mr. Graham, who recognized his aunt's double-knock, and foresaw with some annoyance that Mr. Cowper, instead of shortening, would assuredly lengthen his visit; but he was too hospitable, after all, to indulge such feelings, and, subduing them at once, he said:

"We were speaking of my aunt; here she is, come to give you a message for that beautiful Saint Aubin god-daughter of hers."

"I shall be delighted to bear any tender message to the lovely Lily Scot," gayly replied Mr. Cowper. "I have a great weakness for that young lady, and I believe she knows it."

He had scarcely ceased speaking, when the parlor-door opened, and the servant-girl showed in this time, without any signs of surprise, an old lady in a great poke bonnet, beneath which appeared a bright face, which, though framed with locks of snow-white hair, was fresh in color and open in expression as that of a child.

"Edward," she said, from the door, and, walking hastily toward him as she spoke, "I am in a mess, so I have come all the way from Hammersmith for you to get me out of it. Mr. Cowper, is that you? Why, I have not seen you this age! It must be seven years."

"It is, indeed," replied Mr. Cowper, throwing a shade of melancholy on his cheerful face, and doing it very success-

fully, considering the shortness of the notice (but then he was accustomed to look everything he pleased). "I have, however, had compensation in hearing frequently about you through your god-daughter, Miss Scot."

Now this pretty little speech was charmingly delivered, but, scarcely hearing it to the end, and not seeming to give it the least attention, Mrs. Graham, eagerly fastening a pair of blue eyes, which were still bright and expressive, full on Mr. Cowper's face as he stood before her smiling, easy, and courteous, put this most irrelevant and certainly unexpected of questions: "Are you fond of birds?" and, before the young man could give either assent or denial to so comprehensive an interrogation, Mrs. Graham opened her shawl, and placed on the table a small cage, in which two very small birds, with very pink bills and claws, were perched, side by side in a little hoop.

"Here they are," said Mrs. Graham. "You can take them away with you, if you like; for," she added, with the most engaging candor, "*I* don't know what to do with them."

Mr. Cowper was never discomposed, so it was with perfect ease of look and manner that he replied:

"You are most kind, but I should be sorry to rob my friend Edward Graham, for whom these two little darlings are evidently meant."

"Bless you! he does not care about birds," interrupted Mrs. Graham.

"Besides," continued Mr. Cowper, without heeding the interruption, "I am leaving town."

"Are you going to Saint Aubin?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, and, before he could answer, she continued, "because, if so, you can take them, birds, cage, and all, to Lily."

This time Mr. Cowper did look disturbed for one second; then, rallying, he submitted with a smile and a bow, and a "most happy," which was as sincere as most such "most happys" are.

Mrs. Graham sank down on a chair with a sigh of evident relief, and, covering the cage with her pocket-handkerchief, she exclaimed:

"Well, Mr. Cowper, I am so glad, you can't imagine what a weight is taken from my mind."

Mr. Cowper bowed again, and again was most happy;

while Edward Graham, an amused and silent listener till then, now said, as he rang the bell:

"Come, auntie, take off your bonnet, and have a cup of tea."

"Well, I do think I will, my dear boy," replied Mrs. Graham, untying her bonnet-strings, tossing her bonnet on a chair, and taking from her pocket a very limp cap, which she at once placed on her head. "These birds have made me thirsty, I believe. You see, they belonged to a poor foreign lady, a neighbor of mine, who died a week ago in Hammersmith, leaving these little wretches unprovided for. I took them in, and, you may believe me, I have not had a night's rest since they came to the house; for I have a cat, and Mrs. Johnson has a cat, and I do believe that all the cats in Hammersmith come to our garden. And then they look chilly, the mites of things, so I had a fire for them, lest they should be starved. Yet they are great bathers," she added, looking at Mr. Cowper, and addressing him as the temporary guardian of her *protégés*; "and you need give them no chickweed, only a little salad, and seed, of course, and plenty of water—they are not at all troublesome."

"But you had a bird formerly," said Mr. Cowper—"I remember him quite well, a very yellow canary, called Tommy—what has become of him?"

"He was called Tommy, and he was very yellow," said Mrs. Graham, with a sudden brightness that passed like light over her whole countenance; "but he is dead, dead and buried," she resumed, in an altered tone—"you would never guess where, Mr. Cowper—in Kensal Green! He was my daughter's bird, you know," she added, with a little quivering of her nether lip, in which age as well as emotion had a part, "and I thought I could bury him in her grave. Birds will go to cemeteries and build their nests there, and sing there too, as I have often heard them, so why should they not be buried there?"

She looked at her nephew and his visitor with a half-asserting, half-questioning look—a look of mingled earnestness and simplicity strange in a woman of her years—a woman, too, who had a broad forehead, and in whose eyes sparkled plenty of shrewdness. Different as were the two men who heard her, they both felt the charm of that fresh, simple nature, and they both smiled; but to his smile Edward Graham added a comment:

"Aunt, here is your tea; and you like it hot."

"So I do, you good boy."

He poured her out a cup; she raised it to her lips, then put it down again, with startling suddenness, and exclaimed in a tone of alarm:

"Mr. Cowper, you must not give them one grain of hemp-seed, or they'll die—two bird-fanciers have told me so. And mind you tell Lily Scot. And I declare I have got her photograph in my pocket, and surely you can tell me whether it is like or not."

So saying, Mrs. Graham produced an envelope, whence she drew forth the image of the fair Lily Scot, which she handed at once to Mr. Cowper. He took it, gave it a long, complacent look, then returned it, saying:

"Very like, indeed, but not half so charming as the original."

Mr. Graham took the photograph from his aunt's hand, and looked at it with the pleased attention which none save the most hard-hearted of men can deny to the image of youth and beauty. Photographs are no flatterers. This one, then, might be believed when it showed a delicate, refined face, with penciled eyebrows, soft, deep eyes, and an aspect of gentle seriousness.

"Is she dark or fair?" asked Edward Graham.

"Both," replied Mr. Cowper; "for she has raven hair and a lily skin. Her eyes are dark, of course, and her figure, as you can see, is charming; and, altogether, Miss Lily Scot is quite worthy of being the belle of Saint Aubin."

"I am sure she is lovely," said Mrs. Graham, with a beaming face; "much prettier than my friend Laura ever was. You remember Mrs. Fay, Ned, don't you? Did you think her so lovely?"

"I had a glimpse once of a lady of sixty, auntie," he answered, with a smile, "and she was not lovely."

Mrs. Graham looked disconcerted, then said, deprecatingly:

"Well, of course, poor Laura did get old, and yet the world did rave about her."

"Mrs. Fay is rich," said Mr. Cowper, smiling.

"And do you know her?" cried Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows. "But, to be sure," she added, correcting herself, "there is no reason why you should not."

Yes, Mr. Cowper did know Mrs. Fay, and he knew Mrs. Fay's house, too—the old abbey of Saint Olave's.

"A rare old place!" Edward Graham could not help remarking. Then, in answer to his aunt's look, "I was down there the other day," he said, carelessly. "I took a sketch of the abbey—sadly in want of repair, it seems to me."

"Yes," hotly cried Mrs. Graham, "and it is a shame of Laura not to have given you that job, Edward. And she was impertinent, too, when I mentioned it, and poo-poohed me quite rudely, as I told you at the time. And she is so rich!"

Mrs. Graham's nephew tried to laugh, but his olive cheek flushed at the good lady's unnecessary frankness. It was trying, to say the least of it, that Mrs. Graham should have chosen to speak thus in the presence of Mr. Cowper, whom he (Edward Graham) liked so little. And yet the young man showed the most perfect and good-humored tact. He quietly glided away from the subject of Mrs. Laura Fay into the more congenial theme of Lily Scot; and, having lingered upon this long enough for Mrs. Graham to forget her friend's unkindness, he rose and took his leave.

"Mind you bid Lily Scot give them no hemp-seed," was Mrs. Graham's adieu; "and please to tell her that I shall write to her as soon as I have time, but that, if she wants me to see her before I die, she must come to Hammersmith, as I have no fancy to cross the sea."

Mr. Cowper promised to deliver this message, and, taking up the cage with a look of grave responsibility, he departed.

"You have got some luggage, after all," Edward Graham could not help saying.

"Oh! I grudge no trouble taken for the lovely Lily Scot," was Mr. Cowper's gallant answer.

"I hope he will be careful of them!" said Mrs. Graham, as the street-door closed on Mr. Cowper and the birds.

"Yes, auntie, he will; he is going to Saint Aubin, and he has Miss Lily Scot to please," was Edward Graham's dry answer, which, developed, would have meant that Mr. Cowper was not the man to do even a slight kindness without having some personal object in view.

But Mrs. Graham, too simple-minded to understand, said warmly:

"He is a dear, good boy. I am glad you have got such a friend, Ned."

Edward Graham's face darkened.

"Dick Cowper is no friend of mine, aunt," he said, decisively.

Mrs. Graham's blue eyes expressed sincere wonder.

"Dear me! I thought you were bosom friends," she said, innocently.

"No, auntie, we are not."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose.

"And what has he done?" she asked, with native curiosity.

But Mr. Graham was not one who proclaimed his wrongs. For seven years and more he had been silent, and he was resolved never to assert that which it was impossible for him to prove, and which, whether proved or not, was irreparable.

"Auntie, I had better not talk about it to you," he said, quietly. "We were boys both of us, and something occurred which alienated me from Dick Cowper forever; but, as I say, we were lads. To my own resentment I keep true, but I will not visit the sin of the boy upon the man by telling it again, even to you."

"Well, I suppose, you are right," answered his aunt, though she looked rather disappointed; "but I hope he will take the birds safely. I know Lily Scot will be kind to them, little mites of things. Their mistress thought so much of them, poor soul! I am sure Lily will be kind to them. She is a dear girl, and her mother writes that she is so clever and natty about the house, making the most of everything, cutting out, sewing, trimming, for the whole of them, and always well dressed."

"An invaluable accomplishment," remarked Edward Graham, smiling.

"I wish you would marry Lily," cried Mrs. Graham, putting down her cup of tea.

"Auntie!" exclaimed the young man, first staring, then laughing outright. Mrs. Graham laughed too.

"Never mind," she said. "I am sure Lily is a nice girl, though you have not seen her."

"Aunt, I do not doubt it."

"Then suppose you had seen her, and suppose she liked you, why should you not marry her?"

"Auntie, what man in his senses would marry on a hundred a year?"

"Well, but you would marry if you had a better income."

"I suppose so, auntie."

He spoke with something very like indifference. Marriageable men—by which we mean men who want to marry—may be divided into two broad classes. Both proceed on the prudential principle which makes a good housekeeper say: "Traps are worthless, I must get a cat." He who cares for home comfort provides himself with a wife, since no adequate substitute has yet been found for that useful person; but, whereas your thoughtful man generally takes a sober tabby, your thoughtless one prefers a graceful tortoise-shell, and actually likes a kitten best of all. He likes the kitten because it is a kitten, pretty, frolicsome, and full of tricks. He forgets that the days of kittenhood are brief and never return—he does not ask himself whether his kitten will make a good mouser and be worth its keep as the years pass on; the present, not the future, is all that the heedless man cares for. Now, Edward Graham's "I suppose so" showed in its very tone that he hovered between the thoughtful and the thoughtless marriageable man; he had not so far made up his mind as to be either very prudent or very foolish; but was, like nine men out of ten, ready for whatever fate might turn up. On one point only was he firmly resolved: not to marry on a hundred a year.

"Well, Lily Scot is poor," resumed Mrs. Graham, "but I dare say, Ned, you would like her."

"I dare say I should," was the amused reply.

"Well, now, what sort of a girl would you like?"

"A pretty girl, auntie, because I like beauty; a gentle one, because, though I look quiet, I am rather hard to deal with; a feminine one, because a masculine one is my detestation; and a silent one, because I hate noise, tattle, and chatter. Then a careful one, because I am poor—"

"Lily to a T!" cried Mrs. Graham. "You must marry Lily."

"On a hundred a year, auntie?"

Mrs. Graham looked disconcerted, then, dropping Lily, she shot off at a tangent.

"There are plenty of rich girls, Ned."

"And what should a rich girl take me for?" asked Ed-

ward Graham, point-blank. "Have I name, position, distinction of any kind to atone for poverty? Besides, auntie, I should be very desperately in love indeed to marry a rich woman!"

Mr. Edward Graham, as he said this, threw back his head in a way which was as good as a full stop, so far as putting an end to the subject went.

"Let's talk about you," good-humoredly said Mrs. Graham, drawing her chair closer to her nephew's; "what are you doing?—reading? What big book is that?"

With a smile Edward Graham placed it on her lap.

"Saint Aubin! About Saint Aubin, is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, much amazed. "My dear boy, what do you want with a book about Saint Aubin?"

"I want it professionally, auntie. I mean to cover all England—in time—with *cottages ornés*, villas, mansions, etc., all more or less in that style."

"I see; I understand," replied Mrs. Graham, with a sagacious nod; "but, Ned, why don't you go to Saint Aubin? Why," she cried, brightening, "you could have taken the birds to Lily Scot so well!"

"Yes, auntie, admirably."

"Well, but why don't you go there?" she insisted, looking up from the volume on her lap straight into his face. "If it be an advantage to look at this book, would it not be a greater one to see the place itself?"

"I dare say I shall go there next year," answered Edward Graham, quietly.

His aunt gazed at him earnestly, then looked again at the book on her lap. Mrs. Graham and her late husband's nephew were on the most friendly terms, but there was one subject which was seldom, if ever, broached between them—the subject of money. Mrs. Graham, a childless widow, had an income of five hundred a year, of which she spent one hundred and thirty pounds on herself; the rest went in charities to the poor, and in generous assistance to her needy relations. She had been very generous to Edward Graham in his early youth, before he came into his hundred a year, helping him to acquire the education of a gentleman, and to become fitted for his profession. He knew it, and since his manhood he had resolutely and openly declined all his aunt's gifts.

"I am not ashamed to have received great kindness from

you as a boy," he had said to her, "but a man should do for himself; besides, you have your own relations—your grand-nieces and nephews."

"And Ned Graham has his Scotch pride," said Mrs. Graham, smiling; but she knew her nephew too well to insist, and so now, guessing what his real motive for not going to Saint Aubin might be, she dropped the subject, and after a while rose and said it was time for her to go.

"I shall see you into a cab, auntie," said Edward Graham.

"A cab! I never take cabs."

"Well, into the Hammersmith omnibus, then. And now, auntie, are you sure you leave nothing behind—no cap, no umbrella, no bonnet?"

"My cap is in my pocket, and my bonnet on my head, you saucy boy; as to umbrella, I brought none, so you are out for once."

"I dare say I shall find something to-morrow morning," composedly replied Edward Graham.

"If you do, you may keep it."

"Even your cap, auntie?"

"I give you leave to wear it, if you find it," was Mrs. Graham's confident answer.

To do the good lady justice, she had not forgotten her cap, yet something she had left behind, after all, for when Edward Graham, after seeing her into the Hammersmith omnibus, came home, and devoted himself once more to De Renneville, he found the little portrait of Lily Scot lying between two of its pages. The fair young face, with its dark smiling eyes, seemed to look up at him with a serious and winning grace. Edward Graham gazed at it attentively, and the longer he looked, the better did he like its meaning; then he put it aside carefully, and sat up studying De Renneville until one the next morning.

CHAPTER III.

The morning was as bright as early sunshine could make it, when, ten days after this, Edward Graham woke in a room which could have accommodated four such rooms as his back-parlor in Chelsea with perfect ease to itself. It was

also a very different apartment from that dingy bedroom, with its worn carpet, yellow blind, brown moreen curtains, and cold, shining steel grate. The yellow bedroom of La Cité de Jérusalem had never boasted a carpet on its tiled floor; its orange chintz curtains had acquired a mellow tint in many a washing; the sunshine came in through its narrow-paned windows without impediment; its huge chimney was of stone, and bore traces of defaced armorial bearings; and two rococo arm-chairs, rather worm-eaten, and a tall old clothes-press of carved oak almost as black as ebony, were, besides the bed, shrouded in yellow curtains, the chief articles of furniture of the best bedroom of the best inn in the town of Saint Aubin.

It is fortunate or dangerous, but it is never a matter of indifference, to wish strongly; for a strong wish is apt to bring on its own fulfillment. Mrs. Graham had other thoughts besides the fate of the two birds she had confided to Mr. Cowper's care, as she economically rode home in her omnibus after parting from her nephew. She was both shrewd and simple-minded—a not unfrequent conjunction, else poets would not so often be the wisest and the most foolish of men—and her conjectures were now closer to the truth than Edward Graham would have given her credit for.

"Now, I know Ned is dying to see that Saint Aubin place," she soliloquized, looking hard all the time at a sleepy old gentleman opposite her, who was nodding over his cane. "I saw the sparkle in his eye as I spoke of it, and how it died out as I asked why he did not go. He can't afford it, poor fellow! Then he has bought that book, and I dare say spent all his money on it, and so he must wait till next year? Now, how could I manage that, I wonder? He is such an obstinate animal, you see!"

Edward Graham's obstinacy, and Mrs. Graham's resolve to get the better of it, in this particular instance, led to one disastrous result. The good lady forgot all about getting down till she had been driven three-quarters of a mile beyond her own door; but very little did this mishap affect Mrs. Graham, for, by that time, the problem was solved, and she could utter with Archimedes her triumphant "Eureka!" Some animals must be hunted down, but others must be trapped to be captured: to that tribe Mrs. Graham conceived that her nephew belonged, and she found, as she thought, the

very trap for him. She began setting it the next morning, and in a week's time it was ready.

Edward Graham was just on the point of going out one morning, when his aunt's double-knock was heard at the door, and she burst in upon him with the breathless exclamation—

"They are quite safe!"

"They, auntie?—what are they?" asked Edward Graham, rather taken by surprise.

"Why, the birds, of course. I have just had a letter from Lily Scot, and she is so pleased! And Mr. Cowper took such care of them! They arrived beautifully, and she will be sure not to give them hemp-seed."

Nature and profound art are almost identical in their mode of proceeding. Another woman would have begun about the birds because she meant to end in something else. Mrs. Graham spoke about them because, spite the trap she was setting, they were really uppermost in her mind just then, and the result happened to be exactly the same as if she had been guided by the subtlest design. Her nephew was completely thrown off his guard.

"And did you come all the way from Hammersmith to tell me this, auntie?" he asked, smiling with gay banter.

"No, you saucy boy, I did not. I came to ask a favor of you."

"A favor from me, independent auntie!"

"Yes, I want you to do something for me; and I am not sure that you will not say me nay," added Mrs. Graham, giving her nephew a wistful look.

"Not if I can possibly say you yes," he answered, warmly; and, untying her bonnet-strings as he spoke, he looked down very kindly into a face which, though it was not young, and had never been fair, was yet that which he loved best upon earth.

"You're a bonny fellow when you smile so, Ned!" said Mrs. Graham, looking up at him. "But you must not undo my bonnet-strings," she added, laying her hands on his and checking him; "for if you say 'Yes,' I shall have no time to spare; and if you say 'No,' I shall be too much affronted to stay with you."

"You are getting tragic, auntie. And yet you know that, after such an exordium, it must needs be 'Yes.'"

"Very well, then, you will take me over to Saint Aubin

to-morrow," she promptly replied, "and bring me back at the end of a fortnight. Mr. Cowper and her photograph—I left it here after all—gave me a wish to see Lily Scot; so I wrote to her, and made every inquiry; and her answer came an hour ago, and it is the easiest and the cheapest thing in the world. I shall stay at Mrs. Scot's, of course, and you can lodge and board for next to nothing at a very good inn, and go about Saint Aubin while I am getting acquainted with my goddaughter. So there is only the expense of the journey, which is a trifle, but very troublesome," added Mrs. Graham, emphatically; "for there's from here to Newhaven, from Newhaven to Dieppe, and from Dieppe to Saint Aubin, in a dreadful tumble-down old stage-coach; and, as it is out of the question that I should take such a journey alone, I am *so* glad, Ned, that you will take me!"

"What a dear old creature she is!" thought Edward Graham, still looking down into his aunt's face; "and what an effort all this scheming must have cost her, and how she is going to spend her money, and to make herself awfully sea-sick, not that she may see Lily Scot, but, God bless her! that *I* may see Saint Aubin."

"Well," briskly said Mrs. Graham, who felt uneasy at his silence, "when do we start, Ned?—to-morrow?"

But Edward Graham would not let his aunt off so easily. He knit his dark eyebrows and said, severely:

"Aunt, what becomes of our contract? I can't afford this journey; and you know that our articles forbid me to let you pay for it."

"You are very disagreeable!" cried Mrs. Graham, tying her bonnet-strings, and speaking very fast. "I just ask you to do me a favor once on a time, and you will not. I say it again—you are very disagreeable!"

"I only wanted to show you how thoroughly you are in my power, auntie," good-humoredly rejoined Edward Graham, deliberately untying his aunt's bonnet-strings once more; "and how, if I chose to do so, I could keep you forever on this side of the sea."

"Then you will take me over?" said Mrs. Graham, brightening.

"Yes, auntie, I will. And, of course, I do not suspect you of any other design than that which you avow. I do not think for a moment that you want to serve or please me.

Knowing as I do your self-seeking, calculating disposition, I can have no such thought."

"Don't, Ned, please," remonstrated Mrs. Graham, looking uneasy.

"Auntie, you do not escape me so. You are taking a formidable step—weigh it well. Think of sea-sickness."

"No," interrupted Mrs. Graham, looking alarmed. "I won't think of it, please."

"Then think of me, auntie. Am I adamant, that you take me over to the dangerous vicinity of Miss Lily Scot? Think how fatal the consequences may be—for she is poor, and I am poor; yet she is lovely, and I may be fascinating as well as fascinated, and—"

"Don't fall in love with her, Ned!" cried Mrs. Graham, eagerly. "What I said the other night was all nonsense. I wish I had not left her photograph here. Do not fall in love with her—please do not."

"Tell a man not to take a fever when he is going to the very spot where it is rife. The photograph has done its work—I feel every symptom of the malady upon me."

"Nonsense," vigorously remarked Mrs. Graham; "you will be so wrapped up in all the old houses that you will care no more for Lily Scot than if she were a—a griffin."

"Auntie, I adore griffins—in heraldry, of course."

"You are a saucy boy," retorted Mrs. Graham, who was beaming with her success, for, when her grave nephew indulged in banter, he was very well pleased indeed.

Edward Graham was glad, and, what was better, he did not care to hide it.

"I would not have let you get over me, auntie, if I had known what you were about," he said, frankly; "but I am not sorry that you have prevailed. I did wish to see Saint Aubin and Miss Lily Scot, of course, beyond all things."

"Ah! if you would only let me have my way oftener," reproachfully said Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, auntie, you would like it; but, you see, I will not," he answered, with perfect candor.

And thus it came to pass that, while Mrs. Graham, who was not sea-sick after all, found herself on this morning in a pleasant bedroom overlooking a garden full of monthly roses, her nephew woke, as we said, in the yellow room of the Cité de Jérusalem.

It is a strange thing and not an unpleasant one, when we are young, cheerful, and not nervous, to waken in a new country, hear foreign speech, and see for the first time the hundred little foreign sights that are so wonderfully interesting then, and of which, alas! the interest so rapidly fades away. In ten minutes Edward Graham was up and dressed. The whole morning lay before him to see and explore the old mediæval town which had haunted him by night and by day for the last eighteen months. "I shall not hurry," he thought, as he went down a dark, stone staircase. "I shall skip nothing, and, I trust, miss nothing. This is an old house —what is there here?" He pushed a door open, and, standing on the threshold, took a deliberate survey of a yard whence shrill voices of women, much cooing of pigeons, and loud cackling of hens had been rising in pleasant confusion for the last half-hour. It was only the yard of a Norman inn, but how charming it looked in its picturesque untidiness! The old stone walls were crumbling away in dark and yellow patches; a crazy wooden staircase, with linen drying on the banisters, climbed up against one side of the building. It led to some low, gloomy-looking rooms above the broad stables, where, through the open door, Edward Graham caught a glimpse of a noble gray Norman mare stamping and neighing impatiently. "That creature has the head of one of Phidias's horses," thought the young architect, with sparkling eyes; "I must make a sketch of her—if I have time," he added, with a sigh; for what did he see that he would not have liked to sketch?—that old car lying on a heap of rubbish, with one of its wheels off, like a disabled veteran; those children gayly tilting themselves on either end of a long pole; the hens scratching on a dung-hill; and, above all, an old well buried in the wall, and which was all wreathed and garlanded with a rich green vine, just now lit up by a long, golden sunbeam.

"Monsieur wants something?" said a servant-girl carrying a pail of water, and stopping short before Edward Graham, who, after deliberately taking her all in, from her white cap to her short petticoats and neat little wooden shoes, replied in a slow though decent French that he wanted his breakfast in an hour's time, and, turning on his heel, walked out of the house. At once he passed from the noisy, cheerful, sunny world of the inn-yard to a gloomy region of dark, nar-

row streets and tall, wooden houses black with the smoke of centuries. At the end of one tortuous street he caught a pale glimpse of a sunlit Gothic church far away, but, lovely though it looked, like a heavenly citadel not to be reached unless by passing through the shadow of the dark valley, Edward Graham was in no hurry to reach it. "I will miss nothing—nothing," he said, setting his teeth and knitting his brows with the old Roman tenacity, "and I will be in no hurry either." Accordingly, he began with his own house, for the time being, the inn. It was of stone, strong and quite plain, save for an oval medallion above the narrow door, within which was carved the representation of a city with the clearly-cut date of 1587 beneath it. To this the house, which had been a private one for two hundred years, owed its name of Cité de Jérusalem, which the inn had adopted as a sign. And was that Jerusalem such as our forefathers imagined it? There were walls around this town, walls strong and high, with battlements and places of vantage for a good marksman. The gate was a strong one, flanked with turrets and garnished with portcullis and drawbridge. And there were streets and houses and towers and churches with steeples to them in that Jerusalem which, if it still felt the need of prayer, could scarcely be the heavenly city toward which we are all tending. Earthly or celestial, it was the goal of two travelers who appeared on either side of the oval medallion in which Jerusalem was enshrined. One of these journeyers was warm and weary; his feet were bare, poor fellow; he had taken off his slouched hat and carried it in one hand, the other supported a staff resting on his shoulder, and from which his cloak was hanging. The other traveler was struggling against the wind; he had kept his hat on, but his cloak was nearly blown away from his shoulders; one hand firmly grasped his long staff, the other rested on his gourd; his very step was firm—he had buskins on, to be sure—and spoke confidence and bravery.

"Yes, that is life," thought Edward Graham, turning away; "an end in view, and a hard battle for it. The first warm and tired fellow will never reach Jerusalem, never; and that other one will get in, even if he should storm the city. Be it so."

To which of the two travelers Edward Graham, unconsciously perhaps, likened himself, we need scarcely say, as

he devoted himself to the mastery of his Jerusalem, which just then was called Saint Aubin. He went up the street, a characteristic one. The first floor of the wooden houses projected over the mean, dark shops. The second floor projected over the first, and the gable-pointed roof looked as if it would meet its opposite neighbor, so narrow was the strip of sky between. According to De Renneville the Saint Aubin crusaders had brought this gloomy fashion from the East, and, as the local authorities had prohibited it in the year fifteen hundred and ten, more than three hundred years had passed over every one of these crazy tenements. One corner house of great size and strength rose with a sort of castellated dignity above its neighbors, and the successive projections of its three stories gave it a look of mediæval defiance that was still too much for the great leveler, Time. Near it some meaner dwellings submitted to the law of decay. The old builders had covered the front of these houses with slates, or layers of wood carved like tiles, so as to form patterns. But now slate and wood had peeled away in many places, and so one house originally adorned with lozenges had been recklessly mended in squares; and another had not been mended at all, and showed its bare unsightly patches; and another, again, so sleek and handsome was its dark slate coat, looked like a decent burgher clad in city armor, *cap-a-pie*, or, better still, like a plump old dragon, who had coiled himself round into respectability, and left off the slaying of knights and devouring of virgins, that had made him so obnoxious in his youth. And then there were houses of which the tall and strong corner beams were carved, and many a quaint and rude bit of sculpture that had survived the dust and smoke of centuries now charmed Edward Graham's eye. Over one Gothic door the angel Gabriel uttered his pious Ave forever, and over another the Mater Dolorosa sat in her immortal sorrow. In another house Adam and Eve were carved on the corner beams, while on the central one appeared the Spirit of Evil, most uncomfortably perched on the tree of knowledge, and there biding the hour of temptation. And thus the end of the street was reached, and with it the great parish church of the Basse-ville of Saint Aubin.

That church, as all who have visited the picturesque old Norman town will know, is a fine one, as fine as many a

cathedral. It stands on a narrow place and rises from amid ancient houses, dark, dingy, and mean, and its heavy stone mass thereby looks all the more imposing. There is a meaning and a harmony in all things. Gothic edifices, however fine they may be when isolated, lose at least as much as they gain on being thus divided from the surroundings that grew with them. Edward Graham could not but feel how striking was the aspect of that old church, girded with gable-roofed houses and narrow, dark streets, delving down to the heart of the town. As he stood and looked, a sudden fire from the East touched the two lofty towers, and passed in pale-golden light across the rich carving of the façade, adding to the impressive gloom of the three deep porches below.

"Fine, very fine," thought Edward Graham, "but too broad—yes, too broad." And, after passing this temperate criticism on a noble though not faultless specimen of Gothic art, he devoted himself to the central porch. An impatient man would have first entered the church, but Edward Graham, though ardent, was not impatient, and the fine sculptures above the great door attracted him strangely. The unknown mediæval artist had chosen for his subject the great day of the final judgment and the resurrection of all flesh. Christ sat on his throne, and below him rose the dead, leaving their graves to go and meet their doom. Mothers with their babes clasped to their bosoms, nuns in long stoles, hooded monks, priests in their robes, mailed warriors, bearded patriarchs, slender youths and tender maidens—all were there, some walking in grave procession, the calmness of their long slumbers in their whole bearing; others rising from their graves, pushing back their heavy tombstones, with the startled expression of their waking fixed forever on their stone faces.

Though deep was his contemplation, Edward Graham could not help seeing one of the low side-doors in the porch pushed open, and two ladies come out of the church. The foremost was his aunt fresh and blooming, and in the slender, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl behind her he at once recognized Miss Lily Scot.

"Out already!" cried Mrs. Graham, seeming much amazed. "I made sure you were fast asleep."

"I have been out an hour, auntie, but I made sure *you* were fast asleep."

"Old birds are early risers," gayly replied his aunt.

"My dear," she added, turning to her goddaughter, "that is my nephew; I need not tell him who you are, for I forgot your photograph at his place, and I do believe he has it still."

Mrs. Graham was a good woman, a shrewd one, too, in some things, but she often carried frankness to want of tact. Her nephew thought this a very unnecessary piece of candor. For that delicate modesty, which, spite the outcry against the girlhood of our own day, is, and always will be, the grace of young maidens of every period, is so frail and fair that a breath will hurt it. Some girls would have blushed, others tittered, and others again looked foolish on being thus indiscreetly introduced to a young man of twenty-five; but the delicate bloom of Lily Scot's cheek did not deepen, her soft, dark eyes were not averted, and her fair, refined face kept its mingled expression of sweetness and composure. She looked what she was, a young lady, both modest and self-possessed; and, though she was very simply dressed, everything about her, from her little black hat to her neat kid gloves, was perfect in its kind and in its way. Charmed in the sense of being smitten Edward was not, but he was charmed with her beauty, with her look of delicate refinement, and with her quiet, sensible manners.

"Have you seen the brown house, Mr. Graham?" she asked, in a pleasant, low voice; "it is not on your road from the Cité de Jérusalem, but it is close by here, though so much out of the way that it is not easily found. We can show it to you at once, if you like. It is on our way home."

"Yes, you must come and look at it," cried Mrs. Graham, walking off first, and recklessly leaving her pretty goddaughter and her nephew behind; "and when you have seen it, you can come back to the church, then after luncheon you can come and see me, for I shall not go out any more to-day. And the brown house is wonderful, and here we are. You see that shop and the dark passage next it—well, then, go in there till you come to a shabby old court, then open your eyes and look about you; and now good-morning to you, my dear boy, and come and see me after luncheon."

And so, with a warm shake of the hand, a nod, and a smile, Mrs. Graham walked off with her goddaughter; and Edward Graham's eyes could not help following them both until the

poke bonnet of the elder lady and the black hat with the sweet face of the younger one under it had turned the corner of a street and vanished from his view.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARK passage led Edward Graham to a dingy and sunless court inclosed by a dilapidated building of monastic aspect and a few old, untenanted houses. One only seemed to be inhabited, but the dainty trefoils carved around its crazy windows were crumbling away into dust, and the few flower-pots placed on one window-sill, and there looking most insecure, only gave a last picturesque grace to its decay. But where was the brown house?

"Behind you," said a lad, to whom Edward Graham put the question; and, turning quickly round, he saw it standing alone in an angle of the court. It was only a little, narrow, two-storied house; but its front of brown, varnished wood was as polished and as richly carved as a lady's casket. Graceful arabesques enshrined the diamond-paned windows; chimeras supported the dainty balconies, and two laughing, girlish heads, each set in a niche, looked down from beneath the sharp, projecting gable of the roof. In all his experience, Edward Graham had seen nothing like this, so finished, so perfect. And for whom had this house been built? For some merchant of the days when Saint Aubin had ships, and sent them forth as far as the Indian seas; for a man whose daughters—had they dark hair and soft, dark eyes?—sat and plied their wheel in the calm gloom of the rooms within, rich, yet as busy as their own handmaidens. "And now only the wealthiest nobleman could indulge in such a gem," thought Edward Graham. "And yet what a cottage it would make!" Vain hope, and he knew it well as he turned away with a sigh and went back to the church. This time he gave up the porch and entered the building at once. It did not differ from other Gothic churches. It had their solemn gloom, and that look of perpetual prayer which pervades them. It was rich in stained glass, all ancient, and so gor-

geous in hues that Edward Graham could not help thinking of the wonderful garden in the story of Aladdin's Lamp, where rubies, sapphires, and amethysts grew on the trees. The windows were almost all votive offerings, and the young man found it both touching and impressive to look at the old windows, representing with such skill of design as the times afforded, and with incomparable brilliancy of color, some trait taken from Scripture, or from the lives of the saints; and then to see low down in a corner of the gorgeous picture the quaint figure of a burgher in sober black clothing, kneeling, with hands folded in prayer, his wife and sons and daughters behind him, and remaining there in that frail though durable material, as a sign that in his day he had been liberal of his hard-earned substance to God's church and for God's honor.

A few women were kneeling nigh the high altar, but otherwise the church was lonely. Strong and self-reliant though he was, like most men of twenty-five, Edward Graham also prayed. He had faults, some of which were dangerous to himself and to others; but he had not lost, and never could lose, that simplicity of nature which makes a man feel the need of prayer. If *he* had had a church to build, it should have been a devout one. He had, indeed, a great contempt for every form of modern irreligion, and was characteristically convinced that an impious architect could build nothing worth looking at. "Heathen or Christian, a man must believe to do anything great," was Edward Graham's sweeping assertion; "and the man who can only talk and not do, is just no man at all." So he prayed as his Italian mother had taught him, and after a long, leisurely examination of the whole church, he left it by a side-door. The high and dark church-wall extended along one side of the street. On the other side the houses rose high, narrow, and projecting. An old fountain, defaced and rude, gave forth a clear thread of water; and a few green weeds grew bravely in its upper crevices. Facing this was another of these wonderful old houses that are the glory of Saint Aubin. A gigantic key stood out above the dark, open gap of a blacksmith's shop below—a true, mediæval shop, that had never known, and never would know, panes of glass. The smoke of the forge, which now gave forth a bright glow, had blackened the whole house, and such carved figures as remained

unbroken in their little niches. They were all small, and of a dainty cast. One represented Saint Margaret, with her dragon still coiled around her feet; at the other angle of the building stood a mitred saint with his little pastoral staff in his hand, and near him a canary bird hung in his cage, singing his carol of love and praise in the good bishop's ear. Under the gable was a deep arch, in which a broad window was set, and there—how contrived it was not easy to say from below—was a garden full of laurustinums, among which a tabby cat was sunning herself, reckless of the precipice beneath.

Narrow though the street was, the brightness of the morning was stealing into it fast; golden mites danced in the sunshine, and the glimpse of the port, with one or two faint lines of shipping, and the shining sea with which it ended, was seen through the soft, yellow haze of a September morning. The young man stood like one in a dream; five hundred years seemed to roll up the tide of Time, and if a wimpled dame had been gazing at him from one of the narrow windows opposite, if a knight in mail had reined in his steed at the locksmith's shop, and told him about some loose rivet in his armor, it seemed to Edward Graham as if he should not have been so much amazed after all. He was no worshiper of the middle ages for their own sake; he had always looked at them from an architectural point of view; but the impression he now received was so strong that it gave him some trouble to shake it off.

"This will not do," he thought, turning homeward. "I did not come here to dream, but to work like a man who has a name to win and a position to make. I shall begin after breakfast—yes, with the brown house."

No art or science really stands alone. Edward Graham had devoted much time to drawing, and he drew remarkably well. When his breakfast was over, he went back to the brown house, made a rapid and spirited water-color sketch of the whole, then began a careful drawing of the exquisite carving which framed the lower window. It might be useful some day, and, even if it were not, he could not let that graceful shell above, and those drooping wreaths on either side, escape him. He worked hard, yet did not feel the passing of time. The court was a tranquil, shady place. Few people lived in it, and these few seemed all to be gone

out. No sun came to change Edward Graham's effect, and no loiterers to stand in his light. Children had not found him out, and he could work unmolested the best part of the day. He was fond of his aunt, and Lily Scot was charming, yet it was with a sigh of regret that he put by his task to seek these two ladies.

Saint Aubin is divided, like many French towns, into the Basse-ville and the Haute-ville. It was in the Haute-ville that Mrs. Scot resided, and to this Edward Graham now made his way. The Basse-ville was full of noise and traffic just then—that portion especially which lay next the port—and men in woolen jackets and women in white caps abounded; but, as Edward Graham climbed up the steep street which led to the upper town, silence and tranquillity were once more around him. Old, disused fortifications still inclosed the Haute-ville, and it was picturesquely divided from the Basse-ville by an archway massive and roofed, in which an old clock told the time, and close to which rose a belfry, whence every night at nine a large bell, called Roland, rang the curfew. From beneath the dark arch scathed by the fire of centuries Edward Graham could see a long, melancholy street, with tall, stately, stone houses on either side. Close to him, and resting against the arch, was a fountain, by no means Gothic, with Alpheus and Arethusa in languid attitudes and a fat Cupid hovering over them. Looking at this specimen of pseudo-classic with calm disdain, Edward Graham passed under the arch and found himself in the Haute-ville. It looked a tranquil, aristocratic neighborhood; the wooden houses, the Gothic gable ends, the narrow doorways, the carved beams of the Basse-ville were gone, and in their stead the young architect saw stone houses of the seventeenth century, with iron balconies and tall gates, beneath which the stately family carriage and its row of footmen could pass and enter the wide court-yard within. Armorial bearings, scutcheons, and coronets, or, when these failed, gigantic heads of heathen gods, or grim lions' mouths, or laughing masks, with flutes and tambourines, adorned these ancient gates. One of them stood wide open as Mr. Graham passed by, and, from the bales scattered about the court, he saw that the private dwelling had been turned into a warehouse. He looked up; the shield above the gate had been defaced, no doubt, in the great storm of 1793, but on either side still appeared two

large mocking heads of satyrs, who seemed to say to the passers-by:

"You see how it goes with houses—the solemn judge, the gay cavalier, have made room for the manufacturer. *Sic transit*, etc.; but we are still here—time passes, and changes come, and we look and laugh on."

The street was a long one, and Mrs. Scot's house was one of the last in it. It was a small, stone house, solidly built, and profusely ornamented, in the style of the seventeenth century. The dormer-windows, heavy with carving, were set in the steep slate roof, and the two leaden vanes which adorned it were of the most florid kind. Mr. Graham recognized them at once, from the Cupids sitting on the edge of the vases of flowers, as figuring in De Renneville's book; he recognized, too, the pilasters between the four first-floor windows, and the carved heads and ponderous wreaths of foliage, and the massive oaken gate, studded with huge brass nails in patterns. This gate now stood ajar, and Edward Graham, as he raised the knocker, caught a glimpse of a large, airy court-yard, and a green garden behind it. No one having answered his summons, he crossed the threshold and went in. A door stood open on his left. It showed him a large dining-room, with plain furniture, a shining floor, and lofty white ceiling, where flies were buzzing alone. It was useless to go in there. Neither did Mr. Graham think it needful to go up a wide staircase to his right. As he stood in doubt, he saw a bright, girlish head peeping down at him from above the iron banisters, all scroll and foliage, and such as are seldom seen out of old French houses.

"Mademoiselle," he began, hat in hand; but in a moment the head vanished, and he was once more alone. There was nothing for it but to cross the court and enter the neutral ground of the garden. His hand was on the low wicket-gate when he heard a patter of young feet coming down the staircase behind him, and a clear, young voice asked in French civilly, yet not without a sort of authority, "what Monsieur wanted."

Edward turned round and recognized the girl who had been peeping at him a minute before, and had vanished so precipitately on being addressed. He was struck with her appearance. She was tall and slender, and had all the awkwardness of figure of early youth. She was in mourning,

and by no means well or becomingly dressed. Her sleeves were too short, and her skirt might have been longer; then, if her feet were very small and pretty, it was a pity, thought Mr. Graham, that they were slip-shod, and yet he was struck with her beaming aspect, for her cheeks bloomed like roses, and her dark eyes shone like diamonds, and there was a glitter of gold in her brown hair, and that sort of brightness about her which, after all, is no mean portion of beauty. All this he saw while he answered that he wanted Madame Graham.

"She is in the garden," answered the young girl, still speaking French. She opened the low wicket-gate, and showed him into the garden. It was prettily laid out in beds of china-asters, inclosed by a green rim of trees, in the shadow of which Mrs. Graham now sat alone, fast asleep, in a garden chair. Mr. Graham's young guide raised her fine, dark eyebrows and looked at him in perplexed inquiry as much as to say, "Shall I waken her?" Mrs. Graham settled the question by opening her eyes.

"Marraine," promptly said the young lady, addressing her in rather broken English, "this gentleman wants to speak to you."

Having thus introduced Mr. Graham, she seated herself on a low stool at Mrs. Graham's feet, not seeming to consider her presence any intrusion; and then she looked up at Mr. Graham with a free, fearless look of her bright eyes, nursing her knee all the time.

"Well," cried Mrs. Graham, "what have you been doing?—sketching, measuring?—and how do you like the brown house?"

"The brown house is only wood," interrupted the young lady at her feet, and not giving Edward Graham time to answer.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, looking down at her kindly, "I came to Saint Aubin to see one goddaughter, and I have got three besides Lily—her two sisters, and this little fairy, whose name is also Lily—Lily what, my dear?"

"Lily Bertram," promptly answered the young lady.

"Ay, Lily Bertram. She called me Marraine at once, which, it seems, means godmother; and Marraine I am to the whole lot of them. I am all alone just now—am I not, Lily?"

"Mrs. Scot is taking her afternoon nap in her room," said Miss Bertram, nothing loath to join in the conversation, "and Jane and Louisa are gone out with Sarah; and you know, Marraine, I said I would stay and keep you company."

"Yes, my dear. And what is Lily Scot doing?"

"Lily is making a tart in the kitchen."

"Oh! to be sure," cried Mrs. Graham, brightening. "I forgot all about it. You are to stay and dine with us, Ned; and it seems Lily is a wonderful hand at tarts."

"Lily is wonderful at everything," remarked Miss Bertram, whose prevailing fault was neither bashfulness nor taciturnity. "Her tatting is tatting, that's all; and then she makes such sweet baskets and lovely watch-pockets; and, Marraine, do tell her to make you a case for your goloshes —brown cloth braided with crimson! No one makes golosh-cases like Lily," enthusiastically added the young lady.

"I wish that little chatter-box would be off!" thought Edward Graham.

But of this there seemed to be no chance. It was evident that Miss Lily Bertram was already a favorite with Mrs. Graham, and also that she was quite at home in Mrs. Scot's house.

"Shall I show him the view, Marraine?" she suddenly asked—"I mean before the sun sets?"

"Yes, do," answered Mrs. Graham. "Go with the child, Ned. No, I am not going. I am lazy," she added, with her bright smile.

"It is close by," said Lily, starting up, and looking rather anxiously at Edward Graham, as if she feared he would rebel and not come. "We shall not be long, you know."

Ungraciousness was not Edward Graham's fault, after all; so, with a courteous acknowledgment of Miss Bertram's kindness, he followed her down a sloping path, arched over with young trees, and ending in a glimpse of the yellow western sky. Lily went on before him with a light, springing step, rather impeded by the state of her left shoe. Twice it came off her foot, compelling her to a more sober pace. Just as they reached the end of the path, a little tabby kitten scampered across it and vanished among the trees.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried Lily, "that is my kitten—my tabby! It must have climbed over the wall. I must catch it."

And, not troubling herself any more about Mr. Graham, she darted off in quick pursuit, leaving him to find out the

view alone. The discovery gave him no trouble. The path ended in a broad terrace inclosed by a low, ivy-covered wall, and beyond and below him lay the prospect he had come to see. Above spread the lofty blue of the sky flushed with sunset; below the houses and spires and gardens of Saint Aubin sloped down to a green valley, through which wound a river, with patches of shadow or crimson streaks of light, or broad and clear streaks of pale silver; and beyond all this again, far away to the west, in the golden haze of declining day, the narrow port, and the faint lines of the shipping, and the sea fading forever away.

Mr. Graham had expected nothing like this—so sweet, so fair; and he was both surprised and charmed when he at length turned away. The garden, too, seemed larger than he had thought it to be, and instead of returning by the alley along which he had come he entered another, which, after a few windings, brought him in view of one of the beds of china-asters lying under the windows of the house. Around that bed wound a little graveled path, and there Lily suddenly appeared, heated, breathless, and angry, no longer in pursuit of the kitten, but chasing a tall and very handsome youth of eighteen or so, who wore the uniform of a French collegian, and who not merely held her lost shoe, but flourished it aloft like a trophy.

"Give it to me, William," she entreated, panting for breath, and standing still on one side of the flower-bed, while he, too, unconscious of Mr. Graham looking on, paused on the other.

"You know my terms," he answered.

"I'll die first," answered Lily, with a flush of temper and passion no one would have expected from her bright, laughing face.

"Very well," said William, putting the shoe into his pocket, "no kiss, no shoe."

"I hate you!" cried Lily, who looked ready for tears.

A window on the ground-floor of the house was now thrown open, and in the background of a real French kitchen, bright with the brightest of copper saucepans, appeared the dainty figure and charming face of the fair Miss Scot. An apron with a bib to it was pinned before her, her sleeves were tucked up to the elbows, and her white arms were covered with flour.

"William," she said, with demure severity, "give Lily back her shoe."

William looked sulky, but he did not venture to disobey this fair young Mentor.

"There, you little vixen," he said, taking the shoe from his pocket and throwing it at Lily's feet, "take it." With which civil speech he thrust his hands into his pockets, and went away whistling.

Lily Bertram put on her shoe, Miss Scot closed the window, and Mr. Graham came forward.

"He is such a bear," said Lily Bertram, explanatorily, to Mr. Graham; "all boys are at that age," she added, with the gravity of a young matron; "but it is Louisa's fault, you know. We played at forfeits the other day, and she said I was to kiss William, and I never will. And isn't the view pretty?" she added, with an abrupt transition; then, without giving him time to answer: "Ours is much prettier. You can see it at once before the sun sets. We live close by, and I am going in now."

"You are very good," answered Mr. Graham, "but I cannot avail myself of your kind offer."

"You would have plenty of time to come back to dinner," persisted Lily Bertram. "Mrs. Scot never wakens till six, and Lily is very long about her tarts, and papa is out, and even if he were not he would not mind you," added she, with engaging frankness.

Spite this bit of candor, Mr. Graham declined Miss Bertram's offer, not churlishly, but so positively that, parting back the tangled hair from her forehead, as if to see him better, she looked at him with a sort of childish surprise at his coldness, till, a sudden recollection striking her, she exclaimed, clasping her hands in dismay:

"Oh! my goodness! if Tabby has gone over the other wall, I shall never see her again. I know they'll eat her. I know they will!"

With which distracting conclusion Miss Bertram vanished.

Mr. Graham found his aunt again asleep in her chair, but she woke at the sound of his steps, and her first words were:

"My dear boy, I never thought of telling you, but the birds are so well, and they chirruped when I went nigh the cage. I don't mean that they know me, so you need not

laugh, and they are so fond of Lily already. And where is Lily—little Miss Bertram?"

"Gone in pursuit of her kitten, aunt."

"She is a kitten herself," warmly said Mrs. Graham. "I am so fond of her already, and you know I don't take fancies easily."

Mr. Graham smiled, but did not contradict.

CHAPTER V.

In an old English mansion which Edward Graham had once visited he had seen a Dutch picture, which showed forth in an old room with quaint black furniture, blue china, and eastern carpets, a widowed lady and her family. The widow was a comely dame, on whose charms sorrow had not told heavily. She sat as blooming in her carved chair as if she expected that a second bridegroom should come to woo her while her weeds were still new, but she looked so good-humored, so tranquil, and unconscious of all harm, that none save a carping critic could be angry not to find the traces of tears or of sorrow on her pleasant face.

While the widow sat thus and took her ease, her eldest daughter, a fair Dutch girl, with blue eyes and golden hair, ministered to the wants of the younger children. She was very pretty, but, besides this, there was a look of active strength and willing zeal in the figure and bearing of this young maiden, as she stood with her little brothers and sisters around her, that pleased Edward Graham even more than her beauty. She was a busy, working Martha, full of graceful ardor, while her mother—no Mary listening to divine teaching—sat in idle ease, dreaming of all that was to be done, and thinking herself the head of the family all the time.

This picture came back very vividly to Edward Graham's mind in the evening, when he saw Mrs. Scot taking matters as easily as if she were a guest in her own house, while on her pretty, graceful daughter's shoulders fell all the burden, without the honor of her mother's position. Mrs. Scot sat at the head of the table, indeed, and said grace, but it was Lily

Scot who saw to the wants of the guests, Lily who kept a vigilant though kind eye over her two younger sisters, maidens much inclined to giggling; Lily who gave the half-whispered orders to the middle-aged, gypsy-looking English servant-woman who brought in the dishes and waited at table; Lily, in short, who did everything save the talking. This she left to her mamma, who went through it gracefully, but with the evident consciousness that she was doing more than her share of the heavy duties of hospitality.

Mrs. Scot was not fifty. She had been a pretty, blue-eyed woman, and, though rather too stout, was still attractive. Nature had given her an easy temper, passive selfishness, and plenty of indolence; and she had made the best of Nature's gifts. She could talk fluently, and was an extensive letter-writer, but beyond these exertions Mrs. Scot had never been able to go. When she was left a young widow in Saint Aubin, Mrs. Scot declared she could not remain in a foreign country, far from her friends. She must go back to Torquay. She was born in Torquay, her brother and sister-in-law had a house in Torquay, and they had no children, and there was a large garden to their house. She really must go to Torquay as soon as she could; but she never did. She wrote numberless letters to her brother and sister-in-law about her plans; she wearied her friends in Saint Aubin with an accurate description of the large garden in Torquay—which she had never seen—but that was all. The winter was a severe one, she could not travel; then she had to take a new lease of the house, and it would be a pity to waste so much rent; then the baby had the whooping-cough; then all the children's things had to be got ready; and so time slipped through her fingers, and months and years brought their own tale, and Mrs. Scot dreamed of her brother in Torquay, and her sister-in-law, and their having no children, and their house with the large garden attached to it, as if that garden were a rare prospective advantage to herself and her family, until her brother died and her sister-in-law married again, and had a baby every year, and the house in Torquay and its garden were lost to Mrs. Scot, who wondered as much as if that garden were her own ancestral acres, of which she had been defrauded by her brother's widow. This mixture of indolence and procrastination helped to keep Mrs. Scot a widow. She had not been long bereaved when she declared with a

great gush of tears that one of her heaviest troubles was that in justice to her orphan children she must marry again—it was hard, but she must; dear Tom himself would have felt that she must take another mate; but she never did. This second husband was like the garden in Torquay—an imaginary requirement, never to be enjoyed by Mrs. Scot. She wrote to all her friends, to her brother, and later to her sister-in-law, after that lady's second marriage, to know if she ought to accept Captain Blake, who was going to propose, she knew—or Mr. Reynolds, whose attentions were so pointed that all Saint Aubin talked about it; but Captain Blake was ordered off to India, and Mr. Reynolds was sent to Pau, where he died; and in the mean while Lily, who was thirteen, quietly took to managing the house, the income, and the children, and did it very well—so well that Mrs. Scot never seemed to find it out, but spent more and more time in her easy-chair, or on the sofa, or in entertaining her friends, or in writing letters, nursing herself in the fond belief that she had never been able to give poor dear Tom a successor, though she had been wooed and wooed, and was an interesting victim to conjugal fidelity and maternal love.

While Mrs. Scot thus fed on imaginary virtues, or cherished imaginary grievances, as the case might be—for, as we said, she never recovered the loss of the garden in Torquay—Lily, whose young brain was as clear as her mother's was hazy, got through her self-imposed tasks. She had to begin with two little girls very much spoiled, a house untidy from the garret to the kitchen, a stock of broken chairs and damaged tables, three chests of drawers full of torn frocks, half-worn-out stockings, shabby shoes, boots, slippers, collars, and cuffs, and all such rubbish, an income of one hundred and fifty pounds sterling per annum, and two hundred pounds, also sterling, of clear undisputed debts owing to the tradespeople of Saint Aubin. By the time Mrs. Graham crossed the Channel to see her goddaughter, the debts had been paid off, the three chests of drawers cleared out, the shattered furniture mended or replaced, the house made as neat as a baby-house, the two unruly children taught to obey (Lily Scot of course), and sent to a daily school, and the income of one hundred and fifty pounds made to supply all the wants of the family, as it well could in so cheap a place as was Saint Aubin, but as it had never done under Mrs. Scot's management. All

this Lily Scot had not effected either at once or alone. Many and many a sleepless night had she spent pondering over ways and means, before the debts were paid, or even the wardrobe of her little sisters was brought into order; and she could never have been so successful if her nurse had not been at her elbow. Sarah Webster, a gypsy-looking woman of forty, could neither read nor write, but she was shrewd, clever, and quick, and to Lily at least devoted. She would have gone through fire and water for her sake; and when she saw how the child had set her young heart on mending the ways of the house, she entered into all her little plans with a zeal that insured their success. It was natural that in return Lily should ask and take Sarah's advice in all matters that lay within her sphere, and indeed in some that were beyond it.

Something of this Mr. Graham saw as he ate his dinner, watching Miss Scot silent, but never at rest, and listening to Mrs. Scot as she regretfully described the garden at Torquay, and feelingly alluded to her long widowhood. And, being a shrewd man, though a young one, he even fathomed the exact depth of the praises of her elder daughter, in which the good lady indulged. Ignoring the many charming traits in that young girl's character, Mrs. Scot could not weary of holding up to admiration those that were of lesser worth. Lily's skill in embroidery, and her special gift in the making of tarts, Mrs. Scot would have liked to proclaim on the roofs of Saint Aubin; but on her self-denial, her patience, her unwearied industry, Mrs. Scot was silent—not through want of candor, but because she really did not see these qualities. It was a matter of course that Lily should be so.

But, if Mrs. Scot was blind, her guest was not, and when they all adjourned to the drawing-room, a spacious apartment also on the ground-floor of the house, his shrewd, observant eye detected everywhere the tokens of Lily's taste and industry. The furniture was old, and had never been handsome, but there were such pretty cushions, hassocks, antimacassars, screens, and inexpensive knicknacks scattered about it, that the old sofa and arm-chairs had quite a spruce and smart look; and then Lily was so elegant and so neat in herself, as she sat between her two younger sisters at a little round table with a lamp in the centre, superintending the crochet of Jane and the tatting of Louisa, and herself going

through some marvelous piece of fairy-like work, that Edward Graham justly thought her the prettiest thing in the room. Looking at her thus, he found it easy to listen to Mrs. Scot—Mrs. Graham, who was very tired, was nodding in her chair—even though Saint Aubin gossip was the sole theme of her discourse.

The late Mr. Scot had been a very lazy young man, and he found it pleasanter to live in Saint Aubin on his little income than to work and earn money in England. He had brought his young bride to Saint Aubin for the honeymoon, he said—in order to do nothing, said his friends. His children were born there, he died there, and his wife, as we know, remained there; so that Saint Aubin had now become to her, mentally, of course, what the celestial empire is said to be to its inhabitants—the centre of the world. She had practically no ideas beyond it, save in the way of the Torquay platonic grievance. Saint Aubin English ways were Mrs. Scot's great standard of right and wrong, and Saint Aubin English doings her great topics of interest.

The English colony was an extensive one, and it had two rival English churches, in the strife of which Mrs. Scot, though a Catholic, entered with a zeal which surprised her listener. But, then, the Rev. Mr. Wilson was such a gentleman, and he had such a sweet wife, and Mrs. Banes, the wife of his opponent, was such a vulgar creature. There was also a Mrs. Randolph, the bosom friend of Mrs. Wilson, who figured in every other sentence of Mrs. Scot's discourse. Mrs. Randolph's ball last year was evidently an epoch in the annals of Saint Aubin, as chronicled by Mrs. Scot, and, looking at the chair in which Mrs. Graham was gently snoring, she remarked with great complacency:

"You can't think, my dear Mrs. Graham, how well Lily looked in white muslin with red ribbons!"

"Crimson, mamma, please!" corrected Jane and Louisa from the round table, speaking in a breath. "We all three wore white and crimson ribbons, and Mr. Bertram said that Lily—"

"Hush!" interrupted Lily, softly; "what is the difference between red and crimson?"

"But they were crimson," persisted Jane, "and Mr. Bertram said—"

"I remember," interrupted Mrs. Scot, smiling; "Mr. Ber-

tram said that, as Lily was queen of the ball, she did well to wear the royal color. Well, Mr. Graham, I can assure you, it was the most delightful ball I ever was at; but then Mrs. Randolph is such a superior woman. Of course, you know her?"

No, strange to say, Mr. Graham did not know Mrs. Randolph.

"Dear me, how odd! She goes to England every year—she is there now. You will be sure to meet her at her cousin's, the member of Parliament. What is his name, Lily?"

"Johnson, mamma."

"Ah! to be sure. J. Johnson, M. P. for ——; I have seen the card again and again in Mrs. Randolph's card-basket. Lily made it for her—blue and silver beads, the prettiest thing you ever saw, Mr. Graham; but Mrs. Randolph is quite a sweet woman. Mr. Bertram has the highest opinion of Mrs. Randolph. Of course, you know Mr. Bertram?"

"I have been only one day in Saint Aubin," replied Edward Graham, smiling.

"Well, but you know his house?" persisted Mrs. Scot, "the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. The Hôtel Saint Aubin."

But Mr. Graham did not even know Mr. Bertram's house.

"Why, it is the only house worth seeing in Saint Aubin," persisted Mrs. Scot; "the rest is all rubbish. The Hauteville is the only decent part of Saint Aubin, and has but one drawback—it is so dear! Why, my own rent is actually twenty-five pounds a year, Mr. Graham! But yet I am thankful that they are going to pull down all these old rookeries in the Basse-ville," liberally declared Mrs. Scot; "we have had a sea-bathing establishment these five years, thanks to Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard, and we are to have a casino next year, so we may get on in time. Of course, it is building at our own cost. The municipality of this wretched place"—Mrs. Scot was always abusing Saint Aubin and its ways—"gives nothing save the ground. Now, considering that we have been living here years and years, leaving our money here, and, I may say it, Mr. Graham, civilizing the people and the place, it is too bad that we should have to build a casino ourselves. I vote to let no Saint Aubin people into it, but Mr. Bertram says it would be illiberal, and

Mr. Lennard that we must take all the money we can get. Is not that it, Lily?"

"Mr. Lennard says that we cannot exclude the Saint Aubin people from a casino in their own town, mamma," modestly replied Lily.

"I suppose not," candidly answered Mrs. Scot, "but I should like to—they are so narrow, Mr. Graham! Even Mr. Bertram, though he married one of them, grants that. Whom did he marry, Lily?"

"Mademoiselle Grandjean."

"A fisherman's granddaughter, Mr. Graham. Such a *mésalliance* for him! You know who the Bertrams are, of course?"

Mr. Graham supposed the Bertrams were an old family. Mrs. Scot stared.

"Why, they are the oldest family in England," she cried—"are they not, Lily?"

"One of the oldest, mamma," replied Lily, with her modest sweetness.

"And don't I say so? One of the oldest. The Gerald Bertrams, is it not, Lily?"

"No, mamma, the Geraldine Bertrams."

"And is not that what I said? But young people always want to know everything better than any one else. The Geraldine Bertrams, of course!"

She looked at Edward Graham as much as to say, "You hear!" He did hear, but no mansion belonging or having belonged to the Geraldine Bertrams had he ever found in his wanderings, and he remained cooler than Mrs. Scot had expected.

Mr. Graham heard more than enough of the Geraldine Bertrams during the whole evening, which was enlivened, however, by the appearance of several visitors. Foremost of these was a Mrs. Petherick, a widow lady on the sunny side of forty, and a very pretty woman. She had a neat figure, black hair, a fresh color, and good though restless black eyes. The first thing they did on entering the room was to fasten on Mr. Graham with the most active and searching curiosity; then, in answer to Mrs. Scot's attempt at introduction, the lady said, graciously:

"Bless you, my dear Mrs. Scot, I know Mr. Graham already; three people came and told me about his sketching

the brown house before five o'clock struck to-day!—There never was such a place as Saint Aubin, Mr. Graham! If you sneeze at one end of the town every one hears it at the other. Of course, it was Captain Jackall—"

"Jackall!" cried Mrs. Graham, opening her blue eyes. "What an odd name, Mrs. Petherick!" For the two ladies had already met that day.

"It is so ridiculous of me to be always committing that mistake," pathetically remarked Mrs. Petherick, clasping her hands. "Of course, I mean Captain Jekyll, though as to his ever having been a captain, unless in courtesy! Bless you, Mrs. Scot, I know the cut of a military man, and, for all his swagger, there's none of it about Captain Jekyll. Well, of course, it was he told Mrs. Dunker. How he got in there, and Mr. Dunker so exclusive, is more than I can imagine; but he did, and he's there now.—You must know," added Mrs. Petherick, looking at Mr. Graham and his aunt, and addressing them confidentially, "that, when this Mr. Jekyll, or Captain Jackall, or what's-his-name, came to Saint Aubin six months ago, he dropped from the clouds, as it were, not knowing a soul. Before a week was over he had got into Mr. Lennard's; at the end of a month he was at Mrs. Dunker's, though Mr. Dunker always swore he did not trust the man; after that he got everywhere, of course. Mrs. Scot gave in last, but, being the most amiable creature, she did give in; and now this Jekyll is over all Saint Aubin, except at Mr. Bertram's," added Mrs. Petherick, triumphantly. "No Jackall has got in there yet—no, no—and, mark my words, Mrs. Scot, no Jackall ever will."

"Then I dare say we shall see this Captain Jackall," remarked Mrs. Graham, meditatively.

"Of course you will," cried Mrs. Petherick, much amused. "He is coming this very evening."

"Jekyll," corrected Mrs. Scot, with severe dignity. "Captain Jekyll, Mrs. Graham!"

"Mrs. Petherick said Jackall," began Mrs. Graham, in self-defense, "and so—"

"Bless you, I always do commit that ridiculous mistake," interrupted Mrs. Petherick, uplifting her dark eyebrows; "I am known for it. You must not mind me, Mrs. Graham, or you will get into disgrace. No, no, not Jackall, Jekyll, Captain Jekyll.—But"—turning to Mrs. Scot—"I thought it only

friendly to let you know he was coming. He did not say so to Mrs. Dunker; but, as she said to me, 'You know how he pounces upon one, dear. He will be sure to pounce upon Mrs. Scot this evening.' And so I came round to drop you a hint."

Mrs. Scot thanked her visitor rather stiffly, and that lady, having accomplished her friendly errand, soon took her leave.

"Mary," plaintively said Mrs. Scot, when the visitor was gone, "do get my salts ready, dear. The captain does so smell of tobacco that I shall certainly be ill if I have not got them by me.—I need not tell you anything about Captain Jekyll," said she, addressing Mr. Graham, in a languid voice, on which the captain's tobacco already seemed to be taking effect, "because he will be here directly. Mrs. Petherick and he have taken an unfortunate dislike to each other, and endeavor not to meet, but they do follow each other in a very trying manner. You have no sooner got rid of one," added Mrs. Scot, a little crossly, "than you are sure to be pestered with the other. Mrs. Petherick is generally first, and, of course— There's the captain," said Mrs. Scot, sinking back in her chair with a resigned air. "Do give me my salts, Mary."

A loud, boisterous "Ha! ha!" a stamping of feet, a squaring of his shoulders that threatened every piece of furniture in his way with overthrow, and a stride that shook the house, accompanied the entrance of Captain Jekyll. He was a big man, with goggle eyes and a red face. He was tightly buttoned up, and had a general look of buckram about his bulky person. His address was bluff, hearty, and unceremonious.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Scot — blooming, as usual — Miss Lily's eldest sister—ha, ha!—Mrs. Graham, charmed—Mr. Graham, charmed. Saw you at the brown house, sir—saw you hours ago—know all about you, sir, all about you. The Pethericks' gazette had told every soul in Saint Aubin about you before twelve o'clock struck. Ha, ha! an invaluable gazette, Miss Petherick."

"Mrs. Petherick, captain," said Mrs. Scot, smelling her salts.

But the captain only rolled his head waggishly from one shoulder to the other like an amiable bear.

"Miss, not Mrs.," he persisted, with his loud "Ha, ha!"

"Take my word for it, my dear madam. Mr. Petherick, whom no one in Saint Aubin ever set eyes on, is like John Doe, a legal fiction. Bless you, ma'am!" continued the captain, with a wicked wink of his goggle eyes, "I know a lady who has been married—there's twice the spirit in her there's in an old maid," added the gallant captain. "I am sure," continued he, with another wink, but a more reticent one, at Mrs. Graham—"I am sure that lady will agree with me about Miss Petherick when she sees her."

"But I have seen her," answered Mrs. Graham, opening her blue eyes in innocent surprise. "Mrs. Petherick has just been here."

The captain's countenance fell. In vain he broke out into his boisterous "Ha, ha!" and vowed that Mrs. Petherick—he forgot to call her Miss—was as good as a play; the mortification of not having been first was too keen to be hidden.

"Of course she has been here," said he, shifting uneasily in his chair, in evident anxiety to be off, "and of course she has gone somewhere else to tell every one that she has seen Mr. Graham. There never was such a woman, sir—never. I dare say she is at Dunker's now."

"Oh, no!" put in Mrs. Graham, before any one could speak; "she has been there, too."

"Then she is at Mrs. Morgan's," cried the captain, starting to his feet in evident trepidation—"of course she is. Well, I could not help looking in at you, Mrs. Scot, just to see how you are; but I must go now—I really must—letters to write, you know. Good-evening, Miss Lily—charmed, madam—charmed, Mr. Graham."

And with much less boisterousness, and more haste than had marked his entrance, the captain made his exit.

Mrs. Scot languidly requested the window to be opened, and fanned herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Lily was prettily attentive to her mother, but Jane and Louisa, who had stolen out after the captain, came in tittering.

"O Lily," said Jane, "only think!"

"I was sure of it," put in Louisa, in great glee. "The captain asked Sarah which way Mrs. Petherick had gone."

"And he's gone after her!" triumphantly said Jane. "But Mrs. Petherick will be first."

These indecorous remarks made the fair Lily gaze with

gentle severity at the giddy girls. They at once put on a demure look, which they preserved until tea was brought in.

A little before this, Miss Bertram, who had brushed her hair and made herself tidy, slipped into the room, and silently joined Lily and her sisters at the round table. She had brought her work—a piece of canvas, which looked as if it had been tossing about for weeks, and on which was begun a wreath of roses, faded before their time. She worked half a leaf with great ardor, then she looked at Louisa's tatting, then she examined Jane's crochet, then she went into ecstasies over Lily's lace; and so the unlucky piece of canvas slipped on the floor, and Miss Bertram unconsciously trampled on her roses, and, having picked it up, was looking at it ruefully, when more visitors came in. One was a little, sallow, bilious man of fifty, with a sharp pair of gray eyes, and a mobile, irascible mouth. This gentleman proved to be Mr. Lennard, the godfather of Miss Lily Bertram, the widowed husband of Mr. Cowper's aunt, and the uncle of that William whom Mr. Graham had already seen, and who now came in with him. Miss Bertram, on seeing her enemy, gave him a defiant look, which William Lennard returned with an imperturbable stare. This young gentleman was introduced to Mr. Graham as Mrs. Scot's young friend and cousin, and Mr. Lennard as their friend and valued neighbor, and the one who, of all others, could tell him best about the Geraldine Bertrams.

"Of course, you have seen the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold?" promptly said Mr. Lennard. "No? Why, then, what have you seen?" And Mr. Lennard raised his eyebrows. "You see," he resumed, more leniently, "this house being inhabited by an English gentleman of ancient descent, one of whose ancestors, Philip—"

"Philibert," suggested Miss Bertram.

"Yes, Philibert Geraldine Bertram, actually figures as standard-bearer to Henry VIII.—we all here in Saint Aubin take a sort of personal interest in it."

"Philibert!" remarked Mrs. Graham — "a curious name."

"We Bertrams are all christened Philiberts," said Mr. Bertram's daughter. "I am a Philibert, Marraine."

"My dear, I hope you feel all the better for it," good-humoredly said Mrs. Graham.

"Mr. Bertram's house is highly interesting," resumed Mr. Lennard, "and he will be most happy to show it to you, Mr. Graham."

"Come to-morrow before luncheon!" exclaimed Lily Bertram, with sparkling eyes. "*I* will show you the sculptures and the gallery and the turret, and after luncheon I will take you to the prettiest wooden house in all Saint Aubin, and—"

The flow of the young lady's eloquence here received a double interruption. Mrs. Scot listened to her with evident admiration; Mrs. Graham looked amused, and William Lennard sulky; but Mr. Lennard remarked dryly: "Is Mr. Bertram out of town, Lily?" And Lily Scot uttered a gentle but reproving "Darling!" which brought Miss Lily Bertram to her senses. She colored up, took her work, and for thirteen minutes, according to Mr. Graham's reckoning, uttered not one word. But the Bertram topic went on all the same. It seemed to Mr. Graham as if all these Saint Aubin people could talk of nothing else. The antiquity of the Bertram family, the persecutions it had endured for the faith during the reign of Elizabeth, the extinction of the title under the Stuarts, its revival in favor of a Protestant branch by one of the Georges, and its final death during the reign of William IV., were all discussed, for Mr. Graham's benefit, before, during, and after tea. He was also told how the last of the Bertrams, John (and Philibert, of course) Geraldine—Bertram having uselessly revived his claim to the title—had left England in disgust, and come to Saint Aubin many years ago; how he and his wife had died there, and been buried in the old abbey outside the town; how their tomb, in the Gothic style, was one of the sights of the place; and how their son, the present, and, alas! the last, of the Bertrams, having given up all thought of returning to a country where he could not have justice done to him, and having wedded a daughter of Saint Aubin—thus gracefully did Mr. Lennard word it—who brought him the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold as a portion of her dowry, had made that abode, so pregnant with historical recollections of the deepest interest to him, his final home. All this Mr. Graham listened to with patience of good breeding; he was even tolerant of Mrs. Scot's description of Mr. Bertram's person, supererogatory though it might seem in the presence of Mr. Bertram's daughter.

"When I came to Saint Aubin," sighed Mrs. Scot, "Mrs. Bertram was still living, and I was struck with her patrician beauty. I never saw such a carriage, excepting with her son, nor such hands. It is no use denying blood, Mr. Graham. It will show itself. There are well-born people who are plain, I grant; but look at their hands—look at their hands! Mr. Bertram's hand is unique. I call it the Bertram hand. Lily Bertram, too, has it.—Let us look at your little paw, Lily dear."

This was said playfully, of course, and laughing; but, without the least modest reluctance, Miss Bertram held up a lovely little hand indeed, though it was rather a brown one. It was plain that a certain portion of the Saint Aubin English, at least, held Mr. Bertram as a sort of fetich, and that this fair Lily was quite accustomed to all this worship. She certainly had a pretty hand; she was also a pretty girl, spite the turned-up nose which she had no doubt inherited from her plebeian mother; but what cared Edward Graham for either hand or face of Lily Bertram's? Was he not watching that other Lily's white fingers as they plied her needle and thread?—and was he not thinking how sweet and winning was the smile that flitted across her face as Miss Bertram held up her hand? And yet there was something very warm and pleasant about this little girl, and certainly not a particle of aristocratic pride.

The upper town of Saint Aubin was not gas-lit, and the gypsy-looking servant-woman took a lantern and saw Mrs. Scot's visitors to its limits. Miss Lily Bertram, who lived close by, was dropped first, before a low, broad, arched gateway. She bade her godfather and Mr. Graham a good-night, then, flinging her arms around Sarah's neck, she gave her a warm kiss, as she stood on the threshold of the door, and uttered a fond and coaxing "You won't forget, Sarah, will you?" before she let her go.

"So you and Miss Bertram keep good friends, Sarah?" remarked Mr. Lennard, as they walked on.

"Yes, sir, we do."

"What was it you said about her the other day: 'Here's a young lady—'"

"'Here's a young lady who can sing a song, tell a story, and give an answer,' that's what I said, sir."

"Very good! and it's true, Mr. Graham, it's true, every *word of it.*"

And, all the time that they walked together, Mr. Lennard sang his Lily's praises; but he too was dropped at his own door, and Mr. Graham walked on alone, preceded by Sarah and her lantern. The night was starless, the street was dark, and the light of the lantern danced up and down the front of the gloomy houses like a will-of-the-wisp. As Mr. Graham walked on, his fancy dwelt not so much on the sweet young face of Miss Scot as on her graceful household ways. He was not smitten with her, at least he told himself that he was not; but he thought, "Ah! if a man could but win that girl, what a prize he would find her!"

"You have the gas-light now, sir," said Sarah, as they reached the arch which divided the upper from the lower town.

She turned back, and Mr. Graham went on alone. There was nothing of the will-of-the-wisp about the sober gas-lights of the lower town; but he missed his way three times before he reached at last the safe haven of the City of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VI.

We all have a certain individual fashion of seeing things, and Mr. Graham's was to do his sight-seeing alone, and in the order that pleased him best. He did not choose to go and see the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold the next morning, but, incited thereto by some words which Mr. Lennard had dropped concerning its romantic situation, he made his way to the old abbey of Saint Aubin, *sur dun*, in which the last of the Bertrams was buried. The village lay in a fissure of the cliffs, its long, straggling, and solitary street ending with the sea. A shallow but rapid river, green and clear, flowed round this little Norman nest. Thatched houses, busy mills, willows and poplars shaded its narrow banks; ducks cackled in the pools or slept on the rippling surface of the water; pigs ran about, cocks crowed on every dunghill, and children played near the open doorways, by which mothers, in striped petticoats and white caps, wound silk and worsted, while the click of the loom within told the occupation of

the husband and father. All this was very pretty. So was the Gothic church, little and old; so were the orchards with the reddest of apples weighing down their boughs, and the straggling gardens, where old-fashioned flowers grew among the vegetables. Edward Graham liked and enjoyed it all, but of abbey or romantic ruin he saw no sign.

At length a boy led him down a narrow lane ending in a low door; the boy pushed it open, and a glimpse of a cool, green place, silent and lonely, suddenly greeted Mr. Graham's eyes. He slipped a few sous in his guide's hand, and dismissed him. The lad touched his cap and turned away, whistling carelessly. Mr. Graham had his wish—he was alone. He stood on the threshold of a wide court, planted with rows of old clipped trees, and inclosed by the abbey buildings, tall, dark, and decaying. The place thus divided from the gay, warm world without was chill and full of a green gloom. It had once been flagged, but high, slender meadow grasses now grew between the loose stones of the pavement, shaking their plumed heads in the cool September air. Mr. Graham made his way through them, crushing them with regret, to the centre of the court. There, in the shadow of the old trees, but lit up with a few gleams of the noonday sun, which hung hot and bright in the blue sky above, stood a Gothic fountain, with four slender threads of silvery water pouring from four dragon-heads into the shattered stone basin below. A little bird perched on the rim was drinking, throwing back its dainty head, but it flew away on Mr. Graham's approach; the young man heard the startled rush of its wings in the boughs of a neighboring tree; then, save for the low murmur of the water, all again was still.

How sweet, how solemn was the silence of that spot! It was, thought Edward Graham, as if an enchanter had laid all things to rest here. And that a mighty enchanter, one whose deep spell no counter-charm has ever broken, had been there, he found when, turning away from the fountain, he walked round the court, and, looking at the walls stained with the mildew of perpetual shade, he saw them inlaid with tombstones. This cool, quiet court was one of the many palaces belonging to the angel of death. Here he had gathered his silent subjects in by-gone times, and given them those quiet mansions which they seem to like so well. Here for ages he had reigned supreme, deaf to the tide of life that

flowed up to the gates of his abode, and ever gazing with deep, tranquil eyes toward that far eternity where his fatal sceptre shall be broken in his hand, and the tomb on which he sits brooding, as on a throne, shall be shattered into dust.

This quiet court, with its old trees, in which birds nestled and sang love-songs in the spring-time, with its ruined fountain, where they drank in the sunshine, was a graveyard. The deep roots of those trees sprang from, and their green boughs sheltered, graves; that waving grass grew between them, and the water, as it fell with a low, song-like murmur, had no other ear to charm than the ear of the dead.

Mr. Graham went round the court, now and then reading an inscription, or pausing to feel the stillness of the place; he thus came to a low door in a cool, green corner, and, pushing it open, suddenly stood on the threshold of a gray old church, in which, though it was now deserted, a faint odor of incense still lingered. The building was not large, and, walking round at once behind the high altar, Edward Graham found the tombs he was seeking for in the chapel of Saint Joseph. The sunshine fell on them with a cold glare through the tall windows, whence the stained glass was all gone. They might be fine tombs, but they had a desolate look. There were but two; on one a bishop was kneeling with folded hands, and venerable head meekly bent; the other one was a handsome Gothic monument, with a long epitaph in Gothic characters, setting forth in Latin the ancient descent and many virtues of John Philibert Geraldine Bertram, and his wife, Lily de Vaux.

While Mr. Graham was reading this inscription, a little sneeze, which seemed to come from middle air, made him look up rather quickly. A brown head in a white hood was swiftly withdrawn from a gallery belonging to the belfry, but of course it came back almost at once, and Mr. Graham was not much surprised to recognize Miss Bertram's rosy face. She nodded to him, then vanished again. Presently he heard her feet pattering down a dark staircase of which he caught a glimpse through a low door that stood half open in the wall, showing him black steps climbing up in the gloom. In another moment she stood by his side, not much more tidy than on the preceding day, but with a very smart white *capeline* framing her round, young face.

"How do you like grandpapa's tomb?" she whispered,

breathlessly, raising herself on tiptoe to reach his ear—"is it not beautiful? I wish they had put him kneeling like the bishop. I never saw him, you know."

Mr. Graham did not answer. He had a feeling that this little girl, who seemed to be alone here, would stick to him like a leech, and he was not mistaken. When he moved on to examine the tombs more closely, Lily Bertram moved too; when he stopped, she stopped; and when, leaving the church, he went out once more into the funereal court which lay before it, Miss Bertram went out with him as a matter of course. As a matter of course, too, she found her tongue in the open air.

"Don't you like grandpapa's tomb?" she asked; then, passing from question to statement, "It is so fine," she said, "and papa wrote the epitaph, every word of it—it is in Latin, and Mr. Lennard says it is grand; and oh! Mr. Graham, I am so fond of coming here!"

"Do you come here alone?" he asked.

"Oh, no! Marie is out there knitting. Do you like grasses, Mr. Graham? I do; they are so pretty here in spring." She began gathering the tall, slender grasses as she spoke, and, being evidently of a communicative turn, she entertained Mr. Graham all the time with such interesting information as the use to which she put grasses—for the embellishment of her papa's sitting-room—how the vases in which she put these grasses were blue china, and how these said china vases were one of the old Bertram relics. There had been an Admiral Bertram in the family, and he had brought the vases from China, etc. Mr. Graham was too well bred not to be civil, even to a little girl; but, when there occurred a pause in Miss Bertram's fluency, he wished her a good-morning.

"Oh! but I am going, too," cried Lily, with undisguised eagerness. "I have plenty of grasses."

They walked out of the court together, Lily talking all the way up the lane; she was talking still when they came to the end of it, and found an old woman in a white cap sitting on a stone and knitting in the sun; she gave Mr. Graham a quick look of her bright brown eyes, then rose without a word and followed her young mistress, knitting as she walked behind her. Her needles went fast, but they did not go faster than Lily's tongue. Little though the young

man relished the company of this fluent young lady, and pleased though he would have been to drop her civilly, he could not help being amused with her discourse. With a good deal of childishness, there was also a good deal of mother-wit and shrewdness in what this little girl said; unluckily she had something to say about all she saw. They passed by the church; Lily gave her companion its history and its legend. They met a man with a wooden leg; Lily knew how he had lost his leg, and kindly told Mr. Graham all about it. She gathered every field-flower her keen young eyes could spy on the road, and she was so good as to instruct Mr. Graham in botany as she did so. "There never was such a little chatter-box," he thought; and yet he was not much bored, for if Miss Bertram was talkative she was not commonplace. The legend came out very neatly under her hands; the man who lost his leg, who would not be chloroformed because his grandfather, who had lost a leg too, had not been chloroformed, and who smoked a pipe while the surgeon was amputating the limb, because his grandfather had smoked his pipe, you know, under similar circumstances, was a very living man, indeed—wayward, willful, and dogmatic, in Miss Lily's graphic speech; and there was something of their own wildness and freshness in the way in which she talked of the field-flowers she gathered, and of their favorite haunts—all of which she knew, and eagerly volunteered to show Mr. Graham. And thus Saint Aubin *sur dun* was left behind and Saint Aubin was reached, and Mr. Graham, still walking by Miss Bertram's side, with Marie knitting behind them, was beginning to think that he would have to walk home so escorted, when, with the exclamation, "Oh! there's Sister Martha!" Lily darted toward a sister in a black cloak and hood, who was coming toward them with a bright smile on a very blooming though no longer very young face.

"Oh! Sister Martha," eagerly exclaimed Lily, "why did you not come yesterday? I had something so good for your old people; and do come to-day, Sister Martha! Have you got a great deal to-day? Let me look in your basket. Crusts—nothing but crusts! Come to me, and I will give you better than that."

This much Edward Graham heard, for with a bow he hastened to make his escape; but he had scarcely uttered a

pious "Thank Heaven!" when Lily, all out of breath, was once more by his side.

"How fast you walk!" she said; "I had to run to catch you. Why did you not stay to talk to Sister Martha? She is so good and is so full of fun," added Lily, emphatically; "but there is the house of the little sisters of the poor. We can go in and look at the old people, if you like."

Mr. Graham saw a low, straggling house. Through the half-open door he caught a glimpse of green garden, and of a few old men and women sitting in the sun. The dark figure of a young sister in black, but with a white cap and kerchief, flitted to and fro. Mr. Graham was half tempted to go in, but Lily's company held him back.

"Not to-day, thank you," he said, to her evident chagrin. She was going to remonstrate, when her attention was suddenly diverted by seeing Mr. Lennard coming up the street, and reading his English paper as he walked along in the sun.

He seemed to be absorbed in the news, and yet in a moment, and without having appeared to raise his eyes from the page, he had seen, greeted, and, figuratively of course, taken hold of the three. Indeed, to take hold of people and of things seemed to be one of this little gentleman's attributes. Some people are loosely made—their look is uncertain, their step is unsteady, their big, awkward limbs are badly put together, and when their clumsy hands take hold of a thing you are apt to fear, especially if that thing be valuable china, that it will come to grief. But Mr. Lennard was a wiry, compact little man, whose small, keen eye did not merely go through you like a gimlet, but also pinned you like a nail. His hand closed firmly on whatever it seized, and you need have but one fear concerning what that hand clutched so fast, that this remorseless grasp, strong as a vice, might break it. And break it rather than let it go, these bony fingers assuredly would.

New-comers are apt to be prizes in small places and colonies; a prize in that sense Edward Graham was, no doubt, for, instead of walking on, Mr. Lennard folded up his paper, thrust it into his pocket, and turned back with the young man. With little wiry Mr. Lennard talking on his right hand, with young Lily on his left, her listening face in the white hood turned up to his, with Marie walking and knitting behind him, Mr. Graham was fairly a prisoner. "I

suppose I shall go back to the City of Jerusalem thus accompanied," thought the young man, amused at his own predicament, but Mr. Lennard for one had no such intention. He took his captive straight to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and, informing him that of course he would see it now, as Mr. Bertram was within, he evidently did not admit that the young man could have any voice in the matter.

Every one who has been to Saint Aubin knows that the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold cannot be seen from the street. All you see thence as you walk along is a little Gothic archway and an old carved gate. It is only when you cross the threshold of that gate that the quaint old dwelling stands before you, with its gallery, its turret, its tall vanes, its carved front and dormer windows, with its ivied walls and old shattered fountain, all going to a mild and picturesque decay in the Norman sun. Without heeding one word that Mr. Lennard was uttering, Mr. Graham walked on under the archway, then paused to look, and remained so several minutes, absorbed in what he saw. On one side of the court ran a low-roofed gallery with broad windows, beneath which appeared the famous *bassi-rilievi*. A graceful octagon turret still divided this gallery from the main building, but its companion, alas! was gone. The house was a small one. It was not large, and had never cared to be larger; it was only two stories high, yet house, turret, and gallery were as much covered with sculpture as if to be thus adorned in the most costly style had been a condition of their existence. The very attic windows were dormer windows of the richest kind, and the vane springing from the high, slated roof of the turret spread its graceful leaves and flowers in dainty black lines on the blue September sky.

This exquisite relic of the Renaissance would have been disfigured by a comparatively modern wing, built where the other turret should have been, if luxuriant ivy had not climbed up the bare walls, covering them instead of carving, and young evergreen trees, growing close to the flight of stone steps that led to the entrance of the house, had not spread their dark and glossy boughs on the gray stone background, hiding the cold and meagre outlines of the seventeenth century. Even that portion of the house seemed gently crumbling away. The whole place had a look of neglect. The

court was untidy; the basin of the long-disused fountain was filled with plants in earthen flower-pots, and grass and weeds grew close to the old walls, and even here and there between the broad flags of the court.

Mr. Graham stood looking at all this, finding it so like what he had imagined, and yet so unlike; and Mr. Lennard, Lily, and even Marie stood looking at him, watching every motion of his eye and every movement of his features, and waiting silently till he should speak.

"Where are the heads of Francis and Henry?" he asked, at length.

"Here," answered Mr. Lennard and Lily in a breath, both pointing to the wall behind him. Mr. Graham turned round and saw on either side of the arched gateway a niche with a man's bust within. One displayed the broad face and square jaw of Henry, and the other showed the no less characteristic but more refined features of the first Francis. Neither was remarkable as a work of art; Mr. Graham gave them one look, then walked straight to the gallery, and Mr. Lennard and Lily and Marie even went with him. The *bassi-rilievi* were remarkably well preserved, and in them you could still read very plainly the story of the great pageant of their age. Two cavalcades issuing from the towns of Ardres and Guines respectively, and each headed by its own monarch, met in the centre. Nobles and knights, priests and prelates, made a goodly show on either side. Everything was clear, spirited, and living; the men rode in very truth, the horses pranced and tossed their heads, the nobles had a stately look; this was really Henry in the prime of his manhood, this was truly the courteous Francis raising his plumed cap as he greeted his royal brother; and there was no mistaking either king, for the leopards on the housings of the English monarch's horse were still clearly visible, and the lilies had not been effaced from those of the French sovereign.

"Well," impatiently said Mr. Lennard, "what do you think of them?"

And, before Mr. Graham could answer, Lily put in, breathlessly, fearful no doubt lest she should be anticipated:

"The standard-bearer there close to King Henry is Philibert Geraldine Bertram, papa's ancestor, you know."

"No, my dear," corrected a mild voice behind them, "Philibert Geraldine Bertram was not my ancestor; I am not

descended from him. But he was one of the family, of course; I am not going to deny that."

Mr. Graham turned round and saw, standing near them, a tall and remarkably handsome man. He wore a loose, black-velvet morning-jacket and a broad, black-velvet cap, which he touched slightly to the stranger, displaying as he did so the whitest and most beautiful man's hand (with a sparkling diamond ring on its little finger, which flashed forth brightly in the morning sun) which Mr. Graham had ever seen.

Mr. Bertram's person—for, of course, it was he—justified all the praise Mr. Graham had heard lavished upon it. Beauty of feature, grace and dignity of bearing, were his; and with these a calm, self-possessed, courteous manner, which is not always the attribute of ancient birth, but which, when it coexists with it, assuredly lends it no common charm.

"Mr. Bertram, Mr. Graham, an old school-fellow of my nephew's," Mr. Lennard hastened to exclaim, in a manner which had not composure to recommend it. "Mr. Graham is an architect and most anxious, of course, to see the house of Saint Aubin *par excellence*."

"Miss Bertram's house," again mildly corrected Mr. Bertram; adding, with sad gravity, "the Bertrams have no home left in their own country, my friend."

"Yes, I know," muttered Mr. Lennard, striking his cane against the flags of the court; "a pretty mess our legislature makes of everything."

"I am happy to think, Mr. Graham, that the nature of your pursuits will enhance your enjoyment and appreciation of this really remarkable little house," resumed Mr. Bertram, with the faintest touch of patronage, though both his voice and manner were very kind; "this, as you see"—the white hand waved and the diamond ring flashed as he spoke—"this is the English procession, and that is the French one. Allow me to call your attention to the standard-bearer—not because he is a Bertram," he added, smiling, "but because he is really the most finely-conceived figure in the whole series. His seat is really remarkable. He certainly sits better than bluff King Hal, who to me seems a little, just a little, of one side. Does it not strike you so? No? Ah! well, it may be a mistake of mine; but I still think the standard-bearer one of the most remarkable figures in the whole group, and I am glad you agree with me."

Mr. Graham looked slightly surprised, for he had expressed no opinion on the subject; but, with another wave of his white hand, and another flash of the diamond ring, Mr. Bertram continued:

"Have you looked at the sculptures on the turret? They are really very fine. Allow me—you must stand here, a little more to the right—so. Well, now, look at that picture, if I may so call it, under the first-floor window—a man and a woman reaping. The man wears the round straw hat, and the woman the close cap, jacket, and short petticoat still worn by their class at the present day. Very interesting, as you say." Mr. Graham had not opened his lips, but Mr. Bertram really did think that all silent listeners acquiesced with him, as a matter of course. "On this side of the turret we have fishermen in a boat, drawing their nets—very primitive the fishes look in the waves, certainly; farther on, boys are bathing; but the most characteristic of all these representations of rural life is the highest, almost under the edge of the roof. A traveler on horseback is parting from his friend, as you see, at the door of what really looks like a castle; a young girl passes by, carrying a burden on her head; and high up in air, above rocks, houses, and trees, a griffin is bearing a lamb away. Now, what does that griffin mean? Can you tell, Mr. Graham? Have you any idea on the subject? Monsieur de Renneville could not make it out, and La Société Archéologique de Saint Aubin has given it up. Is it an emblem of life, or is it typical of the dangers which beset travelers?—in short, what is it?"

"Why, it's a griffin, of course," said Mr. Lennard, not giving Edward Graham time to answer. "A griffin's a griffin, I say."

"Very true," replied Mr. Bertram, with mild gravity; "but a griffin may have a meaning."

Mr. Lennard gave the flags of the court a smart tap with his cane, and said, tenaciously:

"A griffin's a griffin, and there's an end of it, in my opinion."

There was just a more rapid wave of the white hand, and a sharper flash of the diamond ring, as, without heeding this speech, Mr. Bertram resumed:

"The emblem which adorns the front of the house fortunately need puzzle no one. It is the famous salamander of

Francis I. Very sharply cut, as you say, and in wonderful preservation. Would you like to see the gallery, Mr. Graham? This way, up the steps, if you please."

They crossed the court to go up the stone steps that led to the house. There had been another turret once, as Mr. Graham knew from De Renneville's book, and he commented with regret on its destruction.

"Yes, it was a sad pity," confessed Mr. Bertram; "and it had at one time been his ambition to rebuild that turret, but he had been obliged to give it up. He had regretted it all the more that he had meant that turret to be part of his daughter's portion."

"It was to have been opened on my wedding-day," here remarked Lily Bertram, in an aggrieved tone; whereupon Mr. Lennard pinched her cheek; and Mr. Bertram, going up the steps, said, "Yes, it was to have been opened on Miss Bertram's wedding-day," and again regretted that he had been disappointed.

They entered a little anteroom, on which several doors opened. Mr. Bertram's hand was laid on the door-handle of one, when Marie's shrill voice in the court was heard exclaiming:

"I tell you the hedge must wait, monsieur is busy."

A faint tinge of color rose to Mr. Bertram's pale face, and, apologizing to Mr. Graham for deserting him, and commending him at the same time to Mr. Lennard's care, he abruptly went down the steps. Mr. Lennard tightened his lips as he looked after him, and Lily, opening the first door to their left, said emphatically:

"This is the dining-room—please do look at the oak panels and the ceiling. Papa says they are so fine."

They were fine, indeed, as Mr. Graham saw at a glance—fine, though gloomy; the whole room had a gloomy look; but he did not heed this. He went up at once to the fireplace. The chimney was of unusual size, and all of wood richly carved, and that had once been richly gilt. The smoke of many a by-gone fire had tarnished its splendor, but had not effaced the crimson and azure scutcheon of the Saint Aubins, with two dainty leverets for its supporters. The carving, which was of the most elaborate kind, appropriately represented the destruction of a city by fire.

"Troy, I suppose?" said the young man, turning round

to Mr. Lennard; but Mr. Lennard was gone, and he was alone with Lily.

"Oh! I dare say he wanted to see about that hedge, you know," she said; "but *I* know all about the house. Yes, that is Troy. Will you see the gallery, or go on with the chimney, Mr. Graham? Do go on with it; and I know all about it. That's Hecuba, and this is Priam, and that's Hector—"

"Hector was killed before Troy was burned," corrected Mr. Graham.

"Well, then, it's some one else," coolly remarked Lily. "But I must take off my hood—it's so hot. Don't you find it hot, Mr. Graham? But you have no hood on, to be sure." —"I should hope not!" thought Mr. Graham, who could scarcely imagine himself in a white hood with a frill to it.— "It was dear Lily Scot made this," resumed Lily; "and if gentlemen wore hoods, she would make you one, I am sure— she is so kind. Well, then, that lady's Helen, and that bearded man is Ulysses."

"Are you quite sure of that, Miss Bertram?"

"Oh! quite; papa says so. And, now that you have seen the chimney, do stand up on the table and look at the ceiling. Look—so!"

And up she skipped on the broad table of dark, shining oak to encourage him by her example. But Mr. Graham neither got up on the table nor minded her much. He let her buzz about him like a little summer fly, and looked silently and leisurely at the ceiling, at the window-frames—at everything, for everything was full of interest and pregnant with meaning; and, while he gazed, Lily prattled on, explaining right and left, leaving nothing to conjecture or reverie, but giving her companion the history of all he saw.

From the dining-room they passed to the next apartment. This was the library, and shelves covered with books, a table, and two chairs, were all it could boast of. Yet, if he would have allowed her, Lily would have kept him here ever so long, showing him the books, telling him about her favorite authors, and how and why she liked Walter Scott, or cried over the death of Uncas, with other matters of interest equally vital. But Mr. Graham at length persuaded her to drop this theme—a favorite one, apparently; and from the library they passed into the gallery.

What had once been the state apartment of the Saint Aubins was now turned into a green-house. Only a few of the more delicate plants, which could not bear the September nights of Normandy, were in it on this sunny morning, and Mr. Graham could look at it all. Spite the use to which it was now put—spite the shelves, the flower-pots, the broken tools, and the careless neglect which was as visible here as in the court outside—this gallery bore as many tokens within of ancient wealth and splendor as it did without. The story of Psyche appeared on the ceiling in a series of pictures divided by rich gilt carving, and charmingly painted by some unknown reader of Apuleius. On the walls, between each broad window, were leather hangings framed by carved panels, and representing Roman heroes, and traits of Roman history stamped in *rilievo* set off with gilding.

"I can tell you all about them," eagerly said Lily, as Mr. Graham, approaching one of these panels, began to look at it curiously; "that's Curtius, and this is Brutus, and—"

"My dear Miss Bertram," he interrupted, in a tone of pathetic entreaty, "will you leave nothing to my imagination?"

Lily, who was swinging her hood about, paused in the act with a look of surprise, and, shaking back the hair from her face, gazed up at Mr. Graham in evident perplexity.

"Perhaps you would rather see the garden now," she remarked, after a pause; "I could show you the view, I promised to let you see yesterday evening, you know."

Rather than go through Roman history with this indefatigable little talker, Mr. Graham acceded to this proposal. Lily, delighted at anything that promised a change, threw open one of the French windows of the gallery, and skipped down a flight of steps into a wide, green garden, with many tall trees, plenty of grass, plenty of rose-bushes, plenty of air and sunshine, and nothing else to recommend it. Beauty of design and care of cultivation were both wanting, and, as Mr. Graham saw Lily dancing on before him, with her bright head bare in the hot sun, the most unladylike of young ladies, it seemed to him that there was a secret analogy between her and this green wilderness in which she had been reared. Of course, she talked as she went on, turning round her face every now and then to make sure that he was attending to her. She had dropped Roman history. A goat

of hers, that was called Jeanne, and which she heard bleating, was her theme. It was a most perfect goat. Milk-white, spotless, spirited, and so intelligent! Lily Scot was so fond of Jeanne, and Jeanne adored Lily Scot! And so chatting, and keeping Mr. Graham fast all the time, she led him to the end of the garden; and when they had reached a terrace, similar to that in Mrs. Scot's garden, but far more extensive, she uttered a triumphant "There!" which the prospect below them fully justified.

Yes, it was fine, indeed: spires and city roofs rising from the green of gardens, the silvery river winding through the landscape, the blue sea meeting the blue sky. It was grand, sweet, and fair, like a picture of the old masters, or a poet's dream, and Mr. Graham neither could nor would deny its beauty. He looked long and earnestly, and expressed his admiration in terms as warm as even Lily could desire. Her face beamed as she heard him, and she was all ardor to show him something else. What should she begin with? Her goat Jeanne, or her pigeons, or the orchard, or the famous pear-tree. Every one who came to Saint Aubin came to look at the pear-tree. Mr. Graham said, "Indeed!" and was sure that the pear-tree was a very interesting one. Then, walking up to an old door in the wall, which was one of the boundaries of the terrace, he praised it, asked if it was ever used, and wondered what part of the town it led to.

"Look!" triumphantly said Lily, unlocking it; "that's Mrs. Scot's door close by."

Mr. Graham nimbly crossed the threshold, and this he did with so evident an intention of not crossing it again that Lily exclaimed, alarmed: "But you have not seen the pear-tree!" Mr. Graham was afraid he could not see the pear-tree after all—not, at least, that morning, for he had to call on his aunt, and he perceived he was beyond his time, but he was more obliged to Miss Bertram for all her kindness than he could say. And so, with a low bow, he coolly walked down the street, while she stood looking after him with the door in her hand; blank disappointment and surprise in her face.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT a blessing that door was!" thought Edward Graham; "for that little girl is simply dreadful. But what a house, what a house! De Renneville did not do justice to it. No one could. It is a gem." Once more the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold appeared before his mind's eye. He saw it all. The court with its look of neglect, the gallery with its sculptures, the carved turret, the vane on the blue sky, the dormer windows, the dining-room and its ancient chimney, all came back to him, mixing up with Mr. Bertram, his white hand and his diamond ring, and Lily dancing on before him in the garden, with her brown head glittering in the sunshine. "It is a gem, a gem of the first water!" he thought again. A gem of another kind, but of the "purest ray serene," in Mr. Graham's opinion, was the fair young creature who stood before him as he reached Mrs. Scot's door. Miss Lily Scot was coming home from the cathedral; she had her prayer-book in one hand, and gave the other to her youngest sister Louisa. She was attired, as on the day before, in a dress of plain black silk, with a close-fitting jacket and little white collar, and nothing, thought Mr. Graham, could become her half so well, or suit better the gentle gravity and quiet refinement of her aspect, than this almost mediæval costume; and yet there was nothing too serious in the sweet young face and soft dark eyes which looked at him from beneath the little black hat with modest recognition. Her greeting charmed him by its unaffected grace and perfect ease. Nature had bestowed on this young girl, born and reared in a French provincial town, what even good society does not always give to its children. Miss Scot's manners were both natural and self-possessed. To see her move, to hear her speak, to watch her in the street or in her own home, was to feel that she could never be at fault whatever she did. "I suppose she is not perfect," thought Mr. Graham, as they entered the house together, "but it seems impossible that she should ever commit a mistake."

And this conclusion was a shrewder one than he himself knew. Lily Scot had the gift, a rare one in youth, of discovering her own errors so quickly, and setting herself right

so soon, that very few ever became aware of them. If she dropped her stitches in knitting, she did not allow the blunder to remain and disfigure her work—she undid it so deftly that no one was the wiser. If she "missed" a tart or a pie, it never left the kitchen, and something else took its place on the table. If she was wrong about a date or a locality, she went through her history or her geography a second time, and took care not to be wrong again. And so in everything Lily Scot was right, because she was determined to be so; and because she had taken that resolve early, and had faithfully adhered to it, her range was not an extensive one. What she did she did well, what she knew she knew well, and what life could not give her Lily Scot calmly and resolutely did without. She had early discovered that she had neither the time, nor, failing this, the talent required to become proficient in music, and so she had given it up, not without a pang of regret, but without wasting years to ascertain the fact. She could just accompany her own singing, which, though uncultivated, was sweet, and that was all. The result of all this, though not the calm will and self-denial by which that result had been won, Mr. Graham saw as he watched this young girl in her pleasant household ways, and admired her sweetness and modest grace. She gave him a great sense of repose, though he was not yet a wearied man; his heart beat none the faster because she walked down the garden by his side to lead him to his aunt, but he felt as if he should like that path not to end so soon, and his eyes to rest for ever so long on that calm, young face and graceful figure.

They found Mrs. Graham busy weeding, and, after a few pretty words to her godmother, in which, somehow or other, Edward Graham felt as if he had a share, Lily Scot left them both. She walked back to the house with Louisa, bending down her face to hers, and talking as pleasantly, it was evident, to her sister, as she had talked to her godmother.

"You may well look after her," said Mrs. Graham, watching the direction which her nephew's eyes involuntarily took. "She is the dearest girl I ever set my eyes on, and oh! Ned, she is just the girl you described, and I wish you would marry her."

"Do you, aunt? I wish I had the chance," he gayly and

frankly answered; "but is it likely so charming a girl is not already disposed of?"

"No," triumphantly replied Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling, "she is not. I fancied Mr. Cowper was sure to be in love with her, but it seems he is not. Do marry her, Ned."

"Don't be tantalizing, auntie, and please," he added, ruefully, "do not bid me do that which I cannot possibly do."

"Ah, to be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, looking blank. "I had forgotten all about the money; of course, you can't."

Mr. Graham was not in love with Miss Scot, though he felt as if he could fall in love with her at a moment's notice, so charming did he think her; yet it annoyed him to hear his aunt's prompt acquiescence in the decree he thus passed on himself, and he said, a little shortly:

"Besides, auntie, you seem to think your goddaughter has no voice in the matter. Granted that she is pledged to none, does it follow that she has no preference?"

"Lily Scot does not care a pin about living man," said Mrs. Graham, with a decision and a want of hesitation which did credit to her faith in her own penetration. Her nephew, we have already said so, was not in love with Miss Scot, but he could not help being glad to hear this. He could not think of her now—no, that was impossible—but, suppose that time were given him, might he not some day, perhaps, secure that fair prize?—might he not—

"Does anything ail you?" asked his aunt, staring hard at him.

"How so, aunt?"

"Why, you are quite flushed."

The flush on Mr. Graham's olive cheek became deeper. He started with a sense of danger. To what was he drifting? Was he forgetting his ambition and his poverty, both arrayed against love? He could not marry—he must not; he did not earn his own bread yet—what right had he to think of any woman?

"Let me tell you all I have seen to-day, aunt," he said, resolutely, putting by the dangerous subject of Lily Scot; and he told his aunt minutely the incidents of the morning, and dwelt at full length on Mr. Bertram's wonderful house, adding, by way of conclusion, "You must see it, aunt."

"Thank you, my dear boy. I see it as you speak; but what a pity it wants that turret!"

"Ah! what a pity, indeed!"

"Mr. Bertram ought to have it built."

"It would cost a large sum of money, aunt."

"Let him sell his diamond ring, old dandy. You could build him up a turret in no time. Tell him so, Ned."

Mrs. Graham spoke in perfect good faith. To anticipate difficulties of any kind in a thing that she desired was impossible to her.

"He would laugh at me, auntie," replied Edward Graham, smiling.

"But you could do it," she persisted.

"Yes, auntie, I could; but again I say, don't be tantalizing."

And involuntarily the young man sighed as he sauntered about the garden with his aunt still weeding busily. It is hard to be told to build a turret when you would ask no better than to do it, but have not the faintest chance of being trusted with the task—almost as hard as to be told to marry a charming girl, when you have a hundred a year, and don't happen to earn fifty. Mrs. Graham, still busy in eradicating chick-weed and shepherd's-purse from Mrs. Scot's garden, did not see matters in that light. The silly, kind-hearted woman allowed light fancies, troublesome weeds in their way, to invade the garden of her mind. "Why should not Ned build that turret and marry Lily?" she thought; "the house wants one, I suppose, and I am sure that Lily is in love with no one else. I'll see about it."

Yes, it was true, in one sense, that Lily Scot was in love with no one—not because, like Mr. Graham, she had found no one to be in love with, but because love was, like music, too difficult of attainment. As she walked back to the house, talking pleasantly to her sister, but listening to a well-known voice in the court, it could not be said of her that she was walking in "maiden meditation fancy free," and there was a meaning in the light of her eyes and in the flush of her cheek, which was not love, but might have been something at least very like it.

Lily was neither sordid nor ambitious, but she knew that she was poor, and must not marry a poor man. Girls who have no experience of domestic economy may be romantic

and imprudent, but Lily Scot had been a thrifty manager since the age of fourteen, and the illusions which lead to such marriages could not be hers. When young Thomson, who was really a very agreeable young fellow, had danced with her evening after evening, and morning after morning had haunted the cathedral porch as faithfully as the blind beggar who sat there, she had found it hard to remain cool and unconcerned; and when after this very useless fit of adoration young Thomson went off to England and vanished from Saint Aubin, Lily had sighed with natural regret, for Mr. Thomson was a very nice young man, as girls say—as nice as he was poor. And thus it had happened more than once, for Lily Scot, being fair to look upon, had plenty of adorers, some of whom she could have liked exceedingly well, if Fortune had not forbidden it; but, if this could not be, if Miss Scot had to be wiser than was pleasant, she could not help being moved now and then with the worship which her many graces excited in every manly bosom; and, as she now entered the court where her cousin William stood talking to Mrs. Scot, the flush deepened on her cheek, and the light in her eye grew softer. He was but a boy, and a rude one. She knew his faults, and told him about them very freely, though very sweetly; but he had been worshiping her for the last three years; he had been madly jealous of Mr. Thomson, and of every man who looked at her; he had held her skeins while she unwound them, and listened meekly to her gentle preaching; he had climbed the tallest tree in Mr. Bertram's garden to capture her tame squirrel when that little faithless truant had escaped to its topmost bough; and Lily Scot, being mortal, could not help caring a little, a very little, about the youth. Of course, she would not allow herself to think of him seriously; of course, she only smiled at his boyish passion; but then, you see, she did smile, and she did not frown. And very charmingly did she smile now as she held out her little gloved hand to the young man, looking her sweetest and her best, in his adoring eyes, until Mrs. Scot exclaimed:

"Only think, my dear, William is going away—next week—going to sea—well, no, not going to sea next week, of course, but going away from Saint Aubin for good. How odd of Mr. Lennard to send the boy off so!"

"Indeed!" said Lily, slowly.

She showed very little concern, William thought; but there he was mistaken. Lily felt the blow, and felt it far more keenly than he imagined. An unerring intuition told her that she was the cause of the young man's banishment. He was growing into manhood, and Mr. Lennard was a shrewd, wise man, and parted him from the unwilling siren before it was too late to do so. And so, though she only said "Indeed," and went on, she was thinking all the time with a pang: "I am sure I don't like him, but I might have liked him in time; and he was growing to be so nice and manly, when that foolish little Lily Bertram did not upset him; and, poor boy, he is so fond of me."

"I do wish Mr. Lennard would change his mind," said Mrs. Scot; "it is so odd to have decided upon the sea all of a sudden."

William looked at the flags of the court, and kicked the heel of his right foot against the toe of his left.

"I need not go to sea if I dont like," he said; "but I must leave Saint Aubin." And he looked straight into Lily Scot's eyes.

Lily sighed softly, and asked if William would not come in and tell them all about it. No, William could not do that; besides, he had no more to tell; but he would look in in the afternoon—or, perhaps, in the evening, if they were at home. "Come in to dinner," warmly said Mrs. Scot, "and Lily shall make one of her best tarts—and you know what Lily's tarts are."

William looked at Lily again, and, reading no denial in her gentle face, accepted the invitation and walked away, looking a little less miserable and downcast.

Mrs. Scot continued to wonder at Mr. Lennard's extraordinary resolve of sending his nephew away—then suddenly discovered it was the only wise thing to do, since no one in his senses ever staid in Saint Aubin; and Lily, standing still on the same spot in the court, listened to her mother and said not one word, but thought to herself rather sadly: "He is going away, and I shall never see him again, poor boy—never!"

But life had long taught Miss Scot one of its great lessons —submission to inevitable troubles. So she submitted to this. She entered the house, went up to her room, changed her clothes, and folded and put away her things as carefully and

as leisurely as usual; then—as usual, too—she went down to the kitchen, and held a long consultation with her prime-minister, Sarah Webster.

"I am going to make a tart," she said. "Mr. William Lennard dines with us this afternoon."

Sarah glanced up from the brass candlestick she was scouring, to say:

"Is it true he is going away, miss?"

"Yes, it seems so," composedly answered Lily. "Are we not out of spice, nurse?"

"No, miss; we have plenty. Don't you think it a pity his uncle turns a lad like that on London, miss?"

"I believe he is going to sea. I think we have no cinnamon, nurse."

Lily was intent—or appeared to be so—upon her tart; but Sarah, still hankering after the subject of the young man's departure, hastened to declare "that they had lots of cinnamon," and again thought it "a sad pity that young Mr. William Lennard should be sent off so sudden like."

Lily Scot did not answer. She was putting on her apron and bib, and deliberately tucking up her sleeves above her little, round, white wrists.

"I fancy I know why Mr. Lennard is in such a mighty hurry to send his nephew off," persisted the nurse, giving her young mistress a furtive look, while she seemed intent on a spot on her candlestick; "he has been getting very sweet on Miss Bertram of late, and Mr. Bertram is so high and mighty a gentleman that, good friends as they are, Mr. Lennard knows it would never answer, so he takes the matter betimes, and sends the poor young gentleman out of harm's way."

"I knew we had no cinnamon," exclaimed Lily, opening the spice-box, and speaking with a raised voice and rather a high color.

"I'll go down to Saint Aubin directly and fetch some," said Sarah, with much alacrity.

She put down her unfinished candlestick and was gone before Lily could remonstrate against this hurry. Sarah had good reason for this speed; her conscience was pricking her, and she feared lest her young mistress should read its workings in her face. She had seen what Mrs. Scot ought to have perceived (but never had)—that the boy was growing into

manhood, and that—involuntarily, perhaps—Lily was on the dangerous point of giving womanly gold for very boyish silver. So Sarah, who had a will and a way of her own, had dropped a timely hint to Mr. Lennard a week before this day. "Oh! that's the way the wind blows, is it?" was all Mr. Lennard had said. But how could the nurse doubt that to her was owing William's exile.

"My poor darling, it is all my doing!" she thought, as she went down the street, "and it cuts you up. I can see it do, though you won't pretend it; but why will you think of a penniless lad like that?—why will you? Now—"

"Ah! how do you do, nurse?" cheerfully asked Mrs. Petherick, suddenly coming out of a broad *porte-cochère* low down in the street. "And how are Mrs. and Miss Scot this morning?"

"They are very well, ma'am, thank you," guardedly answered Sarah.

Mrs. Petherick had the pleasantest way possible with servants. She was never familiar one day and supercilious the next, but always bright, cheerful, communicative, and inquiring, as a lady who aims at being a gazette must naturally be with such useful channels of information as the servants of her friends; but Sarah was shrewd—she knew her exact value in Mrs. Petherick's eyes. "Just to find out all she can, you know" (as Sarah was wont to observe in confidence to Mrs. Dunker's English maid); and she was always on her guard with that lady. Mrs. Petherick, who would never be discouraged, airily continued: "And is poor young Lennard really going, nurse?"

"Indeed, I did not know as he was, ma'am," coolly answered Sarah, who took a perverse pleasure in leading Mrs. Petherick astray.

"And perhaps he is not, nurse," cried Mrs. Petherick, nodding. "It would be so like Captain Jekyll, to have rushed in upon poor Mrs. Dunker, pouncing upon her with that absurd story. I should not wonder if he were not now at Mrs. Scot's, upsetting her!"

She looked hard at Sarah, who, but for the fear of victimizing Lily Scot, would unhesitatingly have answered that Captain Jekyll had just crossed Mrs. Scot's door; but she indulged herself at least in setting the inquisitive lady all wrong, and giving the captain a very unfair start.

"I don't think the captain's at our house, ma'am," she said, demurely. "I just saw him going round by Mr. Morgan's."

"So like him," said Mrs. Petherick, with sad compassion for the captain's infirmity. "Talk of women being gossips, nurse. Well, good-morning. Give my love to Mrs. Scot." And with a gracious nod she walked away.

"Sarah is very sly," mused Mrs. Petherick, as she slowly went up the street. "*He* can't be at Mr. Morgan's, since I was there just now. I dare say he is at Mrs. Scot's, after all."

Mrs. Petherick felt tempted to look in at her friend's and try, but, reflecting that, if the captain were there already, he might take advantage of her presence to go off to Mrs. Morton's and spread his news there, she thought her best plan was to forestall him by going straight to that lady. We are happy to state that this decisive line of action was attended with thorough success. Captain Jekyll was just then at Mrs. Scot's, having entered the house almost as soon as Sarah had left it, and, by passing her friend's door, and not losing a second in making her way to Mrs. Morton's, Mrs. Petherick won the race, so far as that lady was concerned.

Sarah, too, had her own thoughts as she went on her way. Talk of servants keeping their distance, she wished ladies would keep *their* distance, she did. If even Mrs. Petherick was the sort of lady who could be of use to Miss Lily, help her to a good husband, and so on; but nothing of the kind, Mrs. Petherick was looking out for herself—any one could see that with half an eye. "I wish she were off with that William you are fretting about, my poor dear," soliloquized Sarah. "What *can* you see in *him?* If it were any one else that could give you a home and make you happy and a lady, I'd cut my hand off before I'd interfere—you know I would. Ah! if it were him, now," thought Sarah, as she saw Mr. Bertram come up the street, handsome, gentlemanlike, and patrician-looking; "some might tell you he is too old, but I'd say, 'Not a bit—not a bit.' For, then, you would be the lady of Saint Aubin, you would, my pet. And wouldn't she jump to have him!"

Mr. Bertram, wholly unsuspicious of the matrimonial fancies which were flitting through the active brain of Lily's nurse, quietly stopped her to put a question. His object was

to learn whether Mr. Graham was at Mrs. Scot's house or not; but he made the inquiry in phrase as polite, and words as choice, as if he had been addressing the fair Lily Scot herself; for Mr. Bertram was like Spenser's courteous knight, Sir Calidore, in whom

> "Gentleness of sprite
> And manners mylde were planted natural,
> To which he, adding comely guize withal,
> And gracious speech, did steal men's hearts away."

And if there be a virtue made to steal away, especially the hearts of the classes that are so dangerously called lower, it is surely that same virtue of courtesy. To toil for their welfare, to suffer for their wrongs, or to die for their rights, are good things; but if you do all this, and yet fail in courtesy to them, count not on their gratitude, no, not even on their justice. You become to them as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Besides, with them, as with others, flattery will go farther than truth any day. Yet Flattery, too, has her dangers, and especially is she dangerous with rude, literal, matter-of-fact people who make no allowances. Courtesy, however, steers clear of all this; courtesy neither climbs to the heights of sacrifice or devotion nor stoops to the unutterable baseness of deceit. It gives little substance, to be sure, but then it asks for little or none in return. It is a very safe boat. It glides smoothly over the roughest sea. It is never heavily laden, and so it never has the ungraceful motions of your sturdy ships with their precious cargoes stowed away in mighty holds. And last, not least, of its many advantages, it need not trouble itself with risks of wind and weather, and pay ever so much money to insurance companies.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Graham is in our garden," answered Sarah, with much alacrity, her dark, gypsy face brightening with pleasure at being able to give the information to this civil, handsome Mr. Bertram, who had such a white hand, and spoke so kindly, for all his diamond ring, that glittered like dew, it did; and as Mr. Bertram smiled kindly and uttered his "Thank you, nurse," with a gentleness that raised the value of the words tenfold, Sarah, walking away, thought to herself:

"He wants Mr. Graham, does he? Mr. Graham is an

architect, does he want him for that? and, suppose he do, and that Mr. Graham gets that turret to build they have all been raving about so long, would *he* be a good match for my pet, I wonder? I saw him looking at her last night, but then they all do, and they go away, and it all leads to nothing."

In small places and narrow circles the thoughts and plans of masters and servants tend oftener to the same goal than the former suspect. Where there are but a few beaten paths, travelers must needs journey together, whatever their degree may be, and perforce, too, they take their rest at the same inn. Mr. Bertram's house held so prominent a position in Saint Aubin that his long-talked-of plan of building a turret to it had become a staple subject with the little English colony settled there. For the last seven years that turret had been discussed by Mr. Bertram and his friends under every possible aspect, and so it came to pass that Mrs. Graham, new-comer though she was, had her plans about it, that Lily Scot's nurse had hers as well, and that, when Mr. Bertram himself now sought Mr. Graham, it was with the feeling, vague as yet, indeed, that he had, perhaps, found at last the man he had been wanting so long. His attempts in that direction had been unfortunate. The Saint Aubin architect would not do on any terms; the Paris architect had been unapproachable from the outset. Who could tell that Mr. Graham had not the double gift of talent and cheapness? Perhaps he had not; but then, suppose he had, would it not be a mortal pity if Mr. Bertram let such a chance as this slip through his fingers? Thus, when Mr. Graham, leaving his aunt to her plotting and weeding, walked out into the street and there met Mr. Bertram, that gentleman fastened on him rather eagerly.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Graham," he said, with that mixture of courtesy and patronage which the long homage of his surroundings had given him. "Would you mind, now that we can be alone and free to discuss the matter—would you mind favoring me with your company for a quarter of an hour or so? I should like to have your opinion about that griffin, also to have a talk with you concerning a few other matters. Are you at leisure?"

Mr. Graham's dark Italian eyes lit involuntarily, and his heart leaped as he was thus addressed. It was not likely, but still, if it were possible! If a task, such a task as is the

making of a man's professional fame, were really before him! He did not think of the money, poor though he was, but, with all the grasping covetousness of strong ambition, his thoughts flew at once to the success of the undertaking and its consequences. Mr. Graham, however, was a self-possessed man, and it was with civil composure that he expressed himself willing to go back to Mr. Bertram's house and discuss that matter of the griffin with him. This time no one interrupted them. Mr. Lennard did not appear, and Miss Lily, unconscious of the opportunity she lost, was bestowing her society and conversation on some rabbits. The court was quiet, and the old house seemed to bask in the sunshine. A flock of white pigeons wheeled around the graceful vane of the turret, or cooed drowsily from some invisible dovecot, and Mr. Bertram could descant on the griffin at his leisure.

"I was obliged to leave you somewhat suddenly this morning, to my great regret, Mr. Graham—to my great regret," remarked Mr. Bertram, in his kindest tone. "I should have liked to talk more fully on the subject of that griffin—poor Mr. Lennard, an excellent friend and neighbor of mine, Mr. Graham, but matter-of-fact—matter-of-fact—now what do *you* think of that griffin?"

He laid that white hand of his with the long, slender fingers on Mr. Graham's arm, and bent his handsome blue eyes on Mr. Graham's face as he spoke.

"There *is* something in blood and birth," thought the young architect, with involuntary admiration of the bearing of the man, but, answering Mr. Bertram's question, he said, candidly:

"I really can offer no interpretation. No man who is not intimately acquainted with the local history and old traditions of this part of France is likely to make even a correct guess."

Mr. Bertram looked pleased with this frank and modest answer, and, declaring that it was very properly put, he kindly gave the young man the benefit of his experience. Mr. Graham listened to him with some amusement, and yet with some interest, too. If this griffin was Mr. Bertram's hobby, he certainly made the best of it, and rode it with great skill and no little fancy. All that has ever been written or conjectured about griffins he had at his fingers' ends,

and used to excellent purpose, showing, without a particle of ostentation, that he was a well-read man and an accomplished scholar. He ended, however, by leaving the griffin pretty much where he had found him, and, addressing himself to the object he really had in view, the turret, he remarked:

"My private opinion, Mr. Graham, is, that the griffin is typical of falsehood or treachery. It was so in Gothic art, and, though this is more Renaissance than Gothic, it is Renaissance on which Gothic has left its stamp."

"The vitality of Gothic is one of its marvels," said Mr. Graham. "I have found it coexistent with Elizabethan architecture. Our ancestors built mediæval churches long after the Middle Ages were over, and in many parts of England cottages varied so little in character for four centuries that an expert only—other data being wanting—can distinguish between the work of the fourteenth century and that of the eighteenth."

"Very interesting!" murmured Mr. Bertram. "I like Gothic. If you have time to spare, Mr. Graham, I will show you a little design of the turret I had then a fancy to build. I should like to have your opinion of it. I have given up the project, but still I should like to have your opinion."

Mr. Graham's dark eyes lit again as he heard this, but he simply said he was at Mr. Bertram's disposal; and so Mr. Bertram went up the steps and vanished under the porch, to fetch the "little design," and Mr. Graham remained outside, looking with a beating heart at the old house in the warm sunshine.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Bertram soon appeared again with a good-sized portfolio under his arm.

"I have brought you a little sketch by Monsieur Duhamel, our local architect, a very clever man," said he, patronizing Monsieur Duhamel at a distance; "but he and I could not agree. I am all for Gothic, Mr. Graham, and, of course, so are you."

"Not in England," promptly answered Edward Graham, who did not like his opinion to be taken for granted. "What

is beauty elsewhere becomes deformity in our climate. When our ancestors raised Gothic monuments, cities were no larger than villages. Moreover, in their virtuous horror for coal, mediæval legislators made the burning of it a capital offense in London."

"Very true," said Mr. Bertram. "I believe that a man was actually tried, convicted, and executed for that motive only—I have read so somewhere."

"And now that we burn coal," resumed Mr. Graham, "we have the result: freestone decays in the London atmosphere. We use it; we lavish upon it ornament, to which that stone lends itself so easily, and smoke and soot soon do their work. Look at our Houses of Parliament; the stone of which they were built had been selected by a royal commission of scientific men, yet they began to decay long before the building was finished, and chemistry had to be called in to arrest the evil. The acids of the London atmosphere are simply destructive; our porous, absorbent stone has no power to resist them. Besides, of what use are crockets, finials, and spandrils, when soot has invaded their delicate beauty before a few years have passed over them?"

"But you would not object to Gothic here!" exclaimed Mr. Bertram.

"Of course not. What have you to fear here with pure air and no smoke?"

"True! Yet, Mr. Graham, Monsieur Duhamel was against Gothic. This is his design: the ground-plan of the turret, a perpendicular cut of it, and the turret itself as it would have appeared when completed and added to the rest of the building."

Mr. Graham looked at a water-color drawing of the house, showing it with two turrets instead of one. The second turret was the exact counterpart of the first, but the rich carving, the quaint *bassi-rilievi*, were absent from its walls; these looked cold, plain, and bare in the strong sunlight which Monsieur Duhamel had thrown on the façade of the old house, as if to show with uncompromising sincerity what the result of his labors would be. Edward Graham shook his head.

"There must be relief in architecture," he said, "and I see none here. We get this relief by the light and shade of mouldings or carvings. These bare walls would not do, Mr.

Bertram. The contrast between them and the rest of the building is too great."

"So I told Monsieur Duhamel," exclaimed Mr. Bertram; but he did not add that a great unapproachable Paris architect, whom he had consulted, had expressed exactly the same opinion as Mr. Graham, and almost in the same words; "only, Mr. Graham, where is the remedy?"

Mr. Graham smiled.

"Build your turret on the pattern of this one," he said, glancing toward that which stood so perfect and graceful before them, "and have *bassi-rilievi* similar in character and equal in execution to these; you could not find a better model."

Mr. Bertram drew himself up a little stiffly.

"I have not a fortune to spend, Mr. Graham," he said; "but, of course," he added, relaxing in his tone, "you could not be expected to know that, and you naturally thought that the last of one of the oldest English Catholic families was in a different position from that which I occupy. If I enjoyed my rights, indeed—but I do not wish to trespass on your attention with such purely personal matters. Suffice it to say that my means will not allow me to indulge in anything of the kind; if I have a turret, it must be a plain one."

"And that will not do."

"Is your advice to leave the place as it is?" asked Mr. Bertram, with the slightest possible touch of superciliousness in his suave voice, and a curl—a very slight one, indeed—of his handsome Greek lip.

"I beg your pardon, I do not take the liberty to advise," modestly and frankly replied Edward Graham. "I only speak in the abstract."

"Then, pray, let us consider this matter under its practical aspect," condescendingly remarked Mr. Bertram, smiling. "What suggestions have you to offer?"

"Three courses are open to you," quietly said the young man. "To leave the place as it is—true, this modern addition is really out of character with the rest of the building; but Nature is a great magician; and that ivy, so rich, so luxuriant, hides the bare plaster, and gives beauty to downright ugliness. Yet, if you object to this—"

"What else have I been saying?" asked Mr. Bertram, in an injured tone.

"If you object to this," continued Edward Graham, "you can build a turret like the one before us; you can have *bassi-rilievi* in every available space, and spend, of course, a large sum of money. The third plan would be to have the turret without the *bassi-rilievi*—"

"I thought you objected to bare walls, Mr. Graham," interrupted Mr. Bertram.

"They need not be bare. You can have plenty of Gothic ornament of the choicest sort, without having *bassi-rilievi* trying to compete with these. They are very fine, but their chief interest is historical. They tell us the story of their age. No modern work could have that charm. To imitate them would be a costly mistake. With mere Gothic ornament, which is very beautiful in its way, you have neither such cost nor such risk to fear."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Bertram tied the strings of the portfolio, and carelessly placed it on one of the sunlit steps near which they were standing.

"Mr. Graham," he said, at length, laying one white hand on the young man's arm, while the other flashed the diamond ring, "I will state the case fairly and openly to you. I have a trifle to spend on this fancy of mine. I could not do it with Monsieur Duhamel, who is expensive, though provincial. You have talent, though you are a beginner. Why should not you and I come to terms? I can spend—say twenty thousand francs. Perhaps you will make a few inquiries, and see if you can do the thing for that money."

Edward Graham looked keenly at Mr. Bertram, then said deliberately:

"Mr. Bertram, I am, as you say, a beginner, and I will rate my services as cheaply as any man. My time and skill you shall have at your own valuation. If I build your turret, I will do it—not for profit, but for the honor of having done it."

"Very gentlemanlike, and very properly put," murmured Mr. Bertram.

"But your proposal," continued Mr. Graham, "involves risk which you are better fitted to meet than I am. You have quarries here, and skilled workmen. Why not undertake this yourself, and—"

"Impossible," interrupted Mr. Bertram. "I am no judge of stone, no judge of building, of a good or a bad workman.

Moreover, I should like to be out of the dust and din of building—I should like to travel. My architect, if I have one, must undertake the whole thing."

"Is there no builder here with whom you could come to terms?" asked Edward Graham, after a while; "no man who could do this from my plans and designs, of course—but with whom you could deal, and—"

Again Mr. Bertram interrupted him, this time almost sharply.

"Mr. Graham, it is impossible that I should attempt to deal with these people. Monsieur Gentil, the builder, is a perfect bear, and I cannot remember without horror"—(the diamond ring flashed quiveringly)—"a conversation which he and I had on this very subject. He might, nay, he would certainly attempt to impose upon you, but you could easily defeat him, while I might as well enter a brigand's cave as put myself in that man's hands. No, Mr. Graham, it was wrong, it was imprudent in me to broach this matter at all, but I will deal with you, or with any other gentleman, never with men of the class of the very improperly-named Monsieur Gentil. So, pray, let this be final. Perhaps you will give my proposal some consideration. I trust no harm has been done. I know that I for one cannot regret the very pleasant chat which we have had this morning."

Mr. Graham smiled, bowed, and took his leave, without saying whether he would or would not give Mr. Bertram's proposal any further consideration, but in reality the subject was one on which he had no doubt. Whatever difference there might be in the cost of material or the price of labor between England and Saint Aubin, the sum mentioned by Mr. Bertram was wholly inadequate, and this thing could not be.

"It was a chance, a glorious chance," he thought, walking down the street—"such a chance as is often a man's making; but I know it was a Fata Morgana dancing before my eyes—yes, all the time I knew it, and I am not disappointed."

We cheat ourselves so. We tell ourselves that we are not disappointed, that we never expected this thing or that one, and yet we think about it and turn it over in our minds, and paint pictures of what might have been, and listen to the lures of the charmer, still declaring all the time that we are not disappointed. Mr. Graham, no wiser than another man,

fell into that snare. He did think of that turret, he did build it, so to speak, he saw it when it was built, and, though he went over Saint Aubin and saw many new things, he could neither go on with a sketch he had begun nor attempt another. Suddenly it occurred to him that it was absurd to linger among wooden or stone houses, and not go down and look at the port, the shipping, and the beach. Of course, it was this omission which was distracting him. Whereupon Edward Graham turned his back upon mediæval architecture, and went down through the Basse-ville to the port of Saint Aubin.

The old Norman town, though it was dying, commercially speaking, was not dead yet. There was still traffic in its streets, there was still shipping in its port, but the traffic had lost its look of breathless hurry, and the ships seemed to linger lazily on their moorings, as if time were forever their own now. Not so could it have been when these grand old churches, when these stately houses were reared in the streets of the old town. But the story of Venice is enacted again and again, as we who look on learn to know.

The British colony had set its mark on Saint Aubin. As he went along the quay, Mr. Graham read, in the first-floor windows of one of the modern stone houses built there, the words, READING-ROOMS, in large yellow letters, and as a living commentary upon them he saw two unmistakably British hats and heads buried in the *Times*. Then one of the English churches, the evangelical one, as he learned later, was the little prim-looking edifice of which he got a glimpse in one of the by-streets; and last, though not least, the large, unfinished casino greeted him as, leaving the port behind him, he went down to the sandy beach. Here he found a long row of bathing-machines, a little girl knitting in the sun and watching the drying of "costumes" belonging to the bathers; then beyond this nothing but the long, low line of sand spreading out to the sea.

The tide was very far out, the sea was pale and blue and still, the beach lonely, the coast uneven without being picturesque, the day calm and golden, as September days often are before equinoctial breezes have begun to blow. Mr. Graham walked on without a purpose, and little by little the pleasant stillness of the day lured him away from that quiet shore, where there was so little to compel his attention, to that world of his own thoughts which he had come there to

shun. He could not help it; the sea, the beach, the coast faded away, and once more Mr. Bertram's house, and the turrets, the built and the unbuilt one, flitted before his eyes, and echoes of Mr. Bertram's talk and of his own rang in his ears.

"I shall go home and dine," thought Edward Graham; but even his dinner did not calm his mind, nor his after-dinner walk either, though that extended far into the green Norman country, and by the silvery windings of the river; and so it was natural that, after being thus haunted by that one provoking fancy through the day, Mr. Graham should dream that night of a white stone turret, brand-new and richly carved, and that a vague remembrance of his morning conversation with his aunt should show him the graceful head of Lily Scot looking down at him pensively from the first-floor window.

Edward Graham, however, was not given to day-dreaming, and so when he woke and got up he could laugh at those visions of the night, and say to them, "Begone, I have had enough of you!" Vain exorcism. He had taken his sketch-book, and was opening his door to go out, when, to his surprise, he found himself face to face with Mrs. Graham.

"And are you actually coming to see me, auntie?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my dear boy; but you were going out. I have only a few words to say, and I can say them here on the landing. When is it to be?—when are you going to begin? I dare say you were coming to tell me, only I always was of an impatient temper."

"But, auntie, when is what to be?"

"Why, Mr. Bertram's turret, of course."

"My dear aunt, what could make you think of such a thing?"

"You don't mean to tell me there is nothing in it, Ned? Why, little Miss Bertram, Lily, as they call her, was watching you and her father from a garret window all the time, and she saw Mr. Bertram showing you the plans, and overheard the best part of your conversation, and she came in and whispered it all to Lily Scot in the evening."

"Miss Bertram is a shrewd young lady," dryly replied Mr. Graham, "but she heard too much or too little. Mr. Bertram and I did talk of this matter, but nothing came of it."

Even in the gloom of the landing on which they stood Edward Graham could see how blank looked his aunt's open face as he uttered the words. But to follow out her own ideas pertinaciously was one of this lady's characteristics, so she almost at once veered round to her own view of the subject, and it was quite gravely that she said, "Are you sure of it, Ned?" And, when he stared in frank surprise, she pushed open his room door, and, entering, took a chair, and continued, in the same even tone, "Tell me all about it, my dear boy."

Mr. Graham obeyed. Still standing with his sketch-book under his arm, he gave his aunt an abridged though correct account of all that had passed between himself and Mr. Bertram.

"Well," she exclaimed, when he ceased, and brightening very much as she spoke, "that is just what Lily says—you are to have the building of the turret."

"But, auntie, don't you understand that the money—"

"Never mind the money," she interrupted, eagerly, "I can let you have plenty."

"Aunty, do you want to make Mr. Bertram a present of *your* money?"

This view of the subject naturally sobered Mrs. Graham. She looked blank once more, but, by some mysterious process of mental logic known to herself alone, she was not convinced, for she resumed, after a brief pause:

"I wish you could manage it, Ned. Don't laugh at me, my dear boy, but I have set my heart on your marrying Lily Scot, unless, indeed, you should have taken a dislike to each other. She is the dearest girl I ever knew, and would be the greatest treasure a man ever had. I wish you could have seen her yesterday evening. We had that bearish William, who is going off to sea, at dinner—well, Lily was admirable to the boy. So sweet, so mother-like, so gentle, and so good she was, and all without show or effort. She is the dearest girl, Ned, and I do wish she were yours."

"Thank you, aunt," he could not help saying with some warmth.

"Well, then, do build that turret, my dear boy. You can make a fine thing of it, I know, and—"

"But, auntie," he interrupted, with a vexed laugh, "how can I do it and be a loser? Mr. Bertram has not money enough to spend, that is the mischief."

"But how can you be sure that the sum he mentions will not do?" said his aunt, a little tartly—"have you tried?—have you asked any one? Saint Aubin is a cheap place for living, why should it not be cheap for building? Why not see that builder? Now, promise me that you will see him, and not give this up without having tried every chance?"

Mr. Graham hesitated. He was a practical man, and never liked allowing his mind to dwell on impracticable matters, whatever their nature might be. He thought it both unprofitable and pernicious to do so in this particular instance. He had come to Saint Aubin to work and study hard for a few days, surely not to waste thought and time on a thing that was impossible.

"Well, of all obstinate fellows—" began his aunt, a little hotly.

"Don't be angry with me, aunt," he interrupted, smiling. "I shall see Monsieur Gentil this very day, if I can; but it will all end in nothing."

"And, mind what I say," replied his aunt, rising, and looking prophetic, "it will end in something, and you will marry—never mind, I know what I mean."

"Auntie, I have no objection to that portion of your prediction," replied Mr. Graham, half in jest, half in earnest; "but of that, too, I say it will all end in nothing."

"And I say you know nothing about it."

"O aunt! what profound truth there is in *that* remark!"

CHAPTER IX.

Monsieur Gentil lived at the other end of Saint Aubin, in a stone-and-brick house, which did little credit either to his taste or fancy. Monsieur Gentil was a practical man. He did not care the smoke of one of his own cigars for taste or fancy. He had portfolios full of either commodity at the command of the ladies and gentlemen who required his services.

Did they want a real Swiss *chalet* of carved wood to overlook the blue sea which skirted the shores of Saint Au-

bin? Monsieur Gentil could build them one up in a trice, as neat and as brown as if it had been cut out of gingerbread. Did they wish for a feudal castle on a small scale, with gray-stone battlements and frowning portals?—Monsieur Gentil had that, too, at his beck. He had Moorish villas with patterns from the Alhambra on the walls; he had Renaissance châteaux—nay, he had even—all from London, as he boasted—Tudor and Elizabethan mansions for the English colonists, who, as usual, liked to carry the national architecture with them, and who, if they did not choose to live in the land of their fathers, chose at least to dwell in houses such as their fathers had lived in.

All this Monsieur Gentil could and would do for you, provided you required him to add or to change nothing. He was willing to build, but he declined to invent. Could he not do it once? asked a simple-minded person. Monsieur Gentil stared. Why, of course, he could; nothing was easier than invention, but Monsieur Gentil had no time for it. He was a builder; he would have undertaken Nineveh, Babylon, and the tower of Babel itself, on reasonable terms—he would not have shrunk from the pyramids of Egypt—but such waste of time as invention implied Monsieur Gentil scouted.

Mr. Graham found this practical man smoking a cigar in his own back-garden—an open, sunny space, where three beds of garish flowers flaunted in the sun. Monsieur Gentil greeted his visitor with that sort of cordiality which, when it comes from one stranger to another, is only a form of ill-bred familiarity, and, twirling Mr. Graham's card all the time between his thumb and forefinger, he informed him airily that he was charmed to see him, and was quite at his service—quite at his service.

Mr. Graham bowed, but was not charmed with Monsieur Gentil's appearance—indeed, that low, narrow, stubborn forehead, those little, black eyes, that seemed to be twinkling through small, round holes, that turned-up nose and large, strong mouth of the man before him, all expressed will and a certain shrewdness, but had never been intended to charm the eye of any gazer. So, in the briefest speech which civility allows, Mr. Graham explained his errand.

"I see. I should be the builder, and you the architect," said Monsieur Gentil, glancing at Mr. Graham's card, "and you, and not Mr. Bertram, are to be my employer, and you

wish to know how much such a turret will cost. Well, monsieur, Monsieur Bertram went to Monsieur Duhamel, and they did not agree; and he had a talk with a París architect, and they did not agree; and he had another talk with Monsieur Cowper, Monsieur Lennard's nephew, and Monsieur Cowper and I went over the matter together, and the figures are still here," added Monsieur Gentil, tapping his little brown forehead significantly. "I need not trouble you with the items; the total sum is thirty-five thousand three hundred and fifty-seven francs and eighty-three centimes. I put in the centimes for the humor of the thing," facetiously added Monsieur Gentil, "but you may call it thirty-five thousand three hundred and fifty-seven francs. 'For that sum,' I said to Monsieur Cowper, 'you will have a stone turret, tall, strong, and well built, of the best of stone, and the soundest of wood; and, when I put the key of the door in your hand, you will confess that Monsieur Gentil is a man of his word.'"

Richard Cowper and Edward Graham had studied architecture together under the same master. It was then that the strong dislike of the one for the other had begun. Young Cowper had left architecture for the law, and, though Edward Graham had persevered in his first course, he could not feel much surprised at hearing the name of his former companion in conjunction with Mr. Bertram's turret. Yet his eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed as Monsieur Gentil spoke—for when was strong prejudice a reasonable feeling?—and it was with some asperity that he said:

"It does not follow that Monsieur Cowper's conception of the turret and mine are similar; therefore—"

"Very true," interrupted Monsieur Gentil. "His was a plain turret. You want ornament, I know. Well, monsieur, you may go to any price. Give me your designs, and we shall come to terms," graciously added Monsieur Gentil. "I will show Monsieur Duhamel that, if he gets on without me, I can get on without him. He undertakes to build," added Monsieur Gentil, in an injured tone, "and look at Baron Monier's château! It fell to pieces twice—a house of cards, monsieur, a house of cards; whereas, what I build is rock, monsieur, rock. You fear we cannot come to terms about the turret. Well, I fear so too. Monsieur Bertram is not rich, you know, and the turret, once you go into carving, becomes expensive. I said so to Monsieur Cowper, a most

agreeable young man. I am sincerely grieved that we cannot come to terms, but charmed to have made your acquaintance."

And so, with Monsieur Gentil grieved and charmed, and with Edward Graham neither much surprised nor much disappointed at the result of this interview, the two men parted.

"Well," thought the young man, as he walked away, "if Cowper wanted to dabble once more in architecture, he had his answer; as to that, so have I had mine. And now, will auntie be satisfied?"

Satisfied in no sense of the word was Mrs. Graham, when on the following day she learned the result of her nephew's interview with the builder. She had set her heart on two things, and the accomplishment of one she made dependent on the success of the other.

She wanted her nephew to marry her goddaughter. He could not do so on his present means, *ergo*, he should build Mr. Bertram's turret, and, making money thereby, become in due time the husband of Lily Scot. She had hinted as much to Mrs. Scot, and that lady had seemed charmed. The profession of an architect was the very one she preferred; for architecture was akin to art, but so much more steady than art, etc. Lily Scot herself, to whom Mrs. Graham imprudently spoke more openly than to her mother, had not discouraged her kind godmother's fancy. She had blushed and smiled, and said, "Dear godmamma, where is the use of it, since even if Mr. Graham cared about me, and I cared about him, we are both, as you say, so poor?" But she had raised no other objection than this one of poverty, perhaps because she felt none. She was convinced that nothing would come of this dream, nothing more than had come of every other affair of the kind. It would be with Mrs. Graham's nephew as it had been with young Thomson, as it was now with poor William Lennard. He would admire her, like her, perhaps, and he would go away and she would remain in Saint Aubin, and be the belle of the place till the light of youth died out of her dark eyes, and its roses faded from her cheeks, and she was Miss Scot (Lily no longer), and "poor, plain Miss Scot" in time, and, who knows, "old Miss Scot" on some future day. Mrs. Graham was wise enough to set no great store on Mrs. Scot's encouragement, and she was shrewd

enough to feel that Lily's candor was rather lukewarm, so far as any preference of Edward Graham went, but she was not either sufficiently clear-sighted or mistrustful to resist the secret influence of a third person.

It would be worth while for some philosophic, inquiring mind to set down in plain figures the statistics of domestic influence in this world of ours. To what extent, for instance, do we or our servants rule each other? Who is the real master—the one who pays or the one who receives wages? We knew a rich lady who could never eat chicken because her cook disliked it. Every one knows, or has known, some one who kept a carriage, but who dare not disobey his or her coachman. The contest for power and supremacy, which leads to national wars, and which in one sense is always going on around us, between parent and child, between husband and wife, between brethren, and between man and man, is never carried on more determinedly than between master and servant or mistress and maid. Who shall have the upper hand? That, from the first day to the last, seems to be the point at issue. Servants are often beaten, and get the worst of the battle; but often, too, they win the day: partly because so many of the means of victory are in their power, and partly, too, because their tenacious, stubborn, ignorant minds are not distracted from the one object in view, as are minds more refined. And then why deny it? Is not vigor often found on the side where pliancy should be? When Eleanor Galigaï was asked, on her trial, by what magic arts she had gained that ascendancy over her mistress, Mary of Medici, which ended so fatally for both, she could answer, with truth as well as with pride:

"By the power which a strong mind naturally has over a weak one!"

Mrs. Graham was not weak, but she was weaker than Lily Scot's nurse; moreover, she laid herself open to such practices as that faithful but subtle gypsy-faced woman might be tempted to try upon her, by the rare openness of her nature. Concealment of any kind was difficult, if not impossible, to Mrs. Graham; and what is there, after all, in a house which servants, when so minded, do not hear or see? Sarah had happened to enter the sitting-room when that little tattling lady, Miss Bertram, was whispering her news in Lily Scot's ear. Sarah and Lily Bertram were fast friends, and it

was the easiest thing in the world for the nurse to know by the next morning as much as Mr. Bertram's daughter knew. That was not much, in reality; and Sarah, not satisfied, tried Mrs. Scot, when she took her up a letter. It was easily done. Lily's mother was one of those ladies who, like the princesses of classical tragedy, must needs pour their joys or their sorrows into the bosom of some humble confidante. Sarah was trustworthy and devoted—surely, Mrs. Scot could not place her confidence better than in this old, faithful, and attached domestic. So concluded the lady, never suspecting that, while the nurse was uttering her demure "Ay, ma'am," and "To be sure, ma'am," or "It stands to reason, ma'am, that you are all right," she was laying secret plans of her own for the success of the scheme which even Mrs. Scot only considered as yet as mere speculation. "Poor, dear Mrs. Graham," said Mrs. Scot, with kind condescension, "it is natural she should want such a girl as Lily for her nephew; but, much as I like her, I fear the match is not good enough—the young man is all very well, indeed, gentlemanlike and nice-mannered, but, then, has he got a position?"

Now, the *éclat* of Mr. Bertram's name, family, old descent, and position, had dazzled even Sarah in her humble sphere, and she could not imagine that the man who built for that peerless gentleman would not be a made man. So, burning to know how matters stood, and to help them on if need be, she ventured to sound, most carefully indeed, Mr. Graham's aunt, and, so far as she could, to help that guileless lady to "see things the right way."

Unluckily, however, for the cause she wished to serve, Sarah Webster was not merely a woman of strong will, she had also a strong, though rude and uncultivated, imagination. This often ran riot, and was the more dangerous faculty that its possessor took her fancies for facts, and, like Robespierre, believed every word she uttered.

"And how do you like Mr. Bertram's house, ma'am?" she asked of Mrs. Graham, when that lady came down to the kitchen on the afternoon of the day that followed her nephew's conversation with Mr. Bertram. That Mrs. Graham had been to look at the house, Sarah knew, for she had seen Lily Bertram taking her to it an hour before, and so she thought she could venture on the question without creating suspicion.

"Oh! it's all very well," absently replied Mrs. Graham. "Have you got a flat-iron, nurse?"

"To be sure, ma'am, I have; but, la! ma'am, what is the matter with your forehead?"

"Why, I have got a new bump," gayly replied Mrs. Graham; "went and knocked myself against my own door, so, please, let me have a flat-iron. I want to keep the thing down if I can."

Sarah had no faith in the flat-iron, but she did not say so; the flat-iron would do to keep Mrs. Graham below, so she gave her the largest and smoothest iron in her collection; and, while Mrs. Graham stood gravely applying it to her forehead, in the delusive hope of subduing the bump which had appeared there, Sarah resumed her attack.

"Yes, ma'am, as you say, it's all very well, but it is a pity it wants that turret, is it not? Mr. Bertram is the nicest of gentlemen, but he is crotchety, and so he won't have it built."

"I dare say it is an expensive affair," remarked Mrs. Graham, nodding gravely.

"Oh! ma'am, 'taint that—Mr. Bertram is very rich, and Miss Bertram, whose house it is, is richer still; but Mr. Bertram is crotchety, and he would not trust the Saint Aubin architect, nor the Paris architect; and, as Mr. Lennard says, he'll never have a turret till he has built one himself."

"I think I may remove that flat-iron," remarked Mrs. Graham; "I find it heavy."

"Oh! ma'am, the bump is ever so big still," eagerly exclaimed Sarah; "but do have this chair, ma'am—it is Miss Lily's own, and a very good one."

Mrs. Graham sat down, and Sarah resumed:

"I don't mean any disrespect to Mr. Bertram, but I do say that rich people get crotchety, and that's why Mr. Bertram's house can't get a turret to it."

Mrs. Graham still sat holding the flat-iron to her bump, feeling rather perplexed by these remarks of Lily's nurse. It was very flattering, to be sure, that this fastidious Mr. Bertram should have thought of her nephew for that turret; but, if he really was so rich, why would he not give poor Ned *carte-blanche*, instead of making the thing impracticable by limiting him as to price.

"Is Mr. Bertram stingy?" she asked.

"Oh! ma'am, he is ever so generous. He subscribes to all their societies here, and he is to find half the money for the casino, and he gave a dinner to the Orpheons—why, all Saint Aubin could tell you so—he is quite an open-handed gentleman."

"And yet I have been told," boldly declared Mrs. Graham, "that he could not agree with his architects because he would not pay them enough. How do you make that out, nurse?"

"I don't make it out at all, ma'am," deliberately answered Sarah, "for I don't believe it. Mr. Bertram may be crotchety, but he would not do a mean thing—he is too much the gentleman for that; but, you see, ma'am, these other gentlemen may have wanted to make too much out of him, or they may not have set the right way about it. I know the Paris man, and he was a stuck-up one, with his eyeglass in his eye, that he was—I know he would have nothing to do with the building; he would do it all on paper, as it were, and run up from Paris once a month to see how it was going on, then put it by, maybe, for a year. As to the Saint Aubin man, Monsieur Duhamel, no wonder Mr. Bertram would not trust him, when everything he does falls to pieces before it is finished. I'd live in a hovel," said Sarah, with much energy, "before I'd let Monsieur Duhamel build me a house. As to Monsieur Gentil, he can't do it—he be only a builder. You see, ma'am," continued Sarah, her black eyes sparkling under her dark eyebrows, "they none of them have the spirit that's wanting. If I were Mr. Bertram, I'd go to Maître Jacques Cœur, who owns all these fine quarries, and I'd get my stone from him, and I'd go to Maître Louis Renaud, who is the best carpenter in the place, and put that dainty little brown house together, and I'd make my bargain with these two, and I'd build such a turret as had never been seen."

The woman was all eagerness, all ardor; she forgot that she was a servant, and earned twelve pounds a year; she forgot even Lily and her own object. She owned the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold for the time being, and, as she spoke, she did really build up such a turret as even a mediæval architect might have been proud of. Mrs. Graham's suspicions had been slightly roused by the persistency with which Sarah kept to one theme, but they died away as she

saw her so ardent. There was a mania in Saint Aubin about Mr. Bertram's house, and Sarah had caught it like the rest, that was all.

"Will you have another flat-iron, ma'am—a cooler one?" said Sarah, sobering down, and thinking it best to change the subject.

"No, thank you; I dare say my bump is all right," replied Mrs. Graham, putting down the flat-iron and rising to go; "but what were you saying about the brown house and a carpenter? I thought the brown house was old."

"Old as the hills, ma'am; but it had to be taken to pieces two years ago and put together again, and it was Maître Louis Renaud who did it, and surely after that he is equal to anything."

Mrs. Graham looked bewildered. Wooden houses that were taken to pieces and put together again were a mystery to her. So she asked for explanation, and got a satisfactory account of the whole affair. It appeared that the brown house had at one time been considered worthy of removal to another site, so it had actually been taken asunder, cleaned up, and transferred to the Jardin Public of Saint Aubin; but, once there, the poor little brown house had proved a brand of discord in the municipal council—one half had voted that it should be removed as unsightly, and the other half that it should stay, as being fair to see; and so the war went on for a year, till a councilor died, and the member selected in his stead gave his casting vote against the brown house, which was forthwith ejected and restored to its mediæval birthplace—the dingy court where Edward Graham had found it.

"This is a queer place," thought Mrs. Graham, as she heard the story; "and they are a queer people, these Saint Aubins, but clever, decidedly clever, to move houses about in that fashion." Such was her conclusion; and Mrs. Graham also thought that Maître Louis Renaud must be a wonderful carpenter, and that, with his help, and that of a few such men, Edward Graham could surely build Mr. Bertram's turret; so she was not much disheartened after all when her nephew gave her his account of his interview with Monsieur Gentil; and she rather startled him by remarking in her sudden way:

"I think you can do without him, Ned."

"Do without a builder, auntie!"

"Be your own builder, I say."

And thereupon Mrs. Graham proceeded to give him her, or rather Sarah's view of the subject, only cursorily mentioning that authority in such words as, "Nurse says that Mr. Bertram is a rich man; and servants know a good deal about these things. She is a sharp, shrewd woman, is that nurse, and gave me a most extraordinary account of the brown house. Would you believe it, Ned, it was taken to pieces and put up again by a Saint Aubin carpenter? Now, such a man would be invaluable to you, I think."

"How so, auntie?"

He spoke calmly, as if he would not understand his aunt's meaning; and, indeed, he would not until she used speech as plain as speech could be. This discourse took place between them on the little terrace at the end of Mrs. Scot's garden, whence the view was so fine. To all appearance that view engrossed Edward Graham.

"Ned," said his aunt, "turn round, please—yes, so—put your back to that wall, and, instead of looking at these roofs and houses, look at me."

He obeyed with a smile, and his aunt, who stood facing him, developed all her arguments. Mr. Graham heard her with seeming great attention, with arms folded across his breast, and eyes looking straight before him and no longer diverted by the fair prospect below.

"And so," remarked Mrs. Graham, by way of conclusion (after talking for a quarter of an hour), "I say that Mr. Bertram will certainly stretch a point if you are not too cold about this matter."

"I suppose so," replied her nephew; but he spoke so absently that Mrs. Graham turned sharply round and looked behind her. She did not see much there, but what she saw was enough. Lily Scot sat in a green summer-house, with a little sister on either side, hearing them through their lessons. Her fair face, her downcast eyes, her graceful attitude, were very pleasant to look upon.

"Ah! to be sure. I had forgotten she hears them here every evening; and we are in the way," remarked Mrs. Graham, explanatorily. "And now, Ned, you heard all I said."

"Yes, auntie."

"And you will make the attempt and see about that man with the stones and the carpenter?"

"I will, auntie."

But he was still looking at Lily, and, as he looked, he thought: "Yes, this is the girl I should like to marry—sweet, modest, domestic, and gentle—but shall I ever have the chance?"

CHAPTER X.

EDWARD GRAHAM was a man of strong will; when he had, after due reflection, come to certain conclusions, he rarely changed his mind, yet he allowed his aunt to persuade him against his better judgment into seeing Maître Jacques Cœur and Maître Louis Renaud. He knew beforehand, or at least he said so, that the attempt would be a vain one, yet, to please his aunt, or because of a secret, far-away hope which lurked within him, he consented to do as Mrs. Graham wished. Of course, the thing would not succeed, but yet, if it did!

As a foreigner, he labored under a disadvantage, but he had self-confidence enough in his own powers of overcoming it not to let that consideration deter him. In this mood Mr. Graham made his way to Saint Aubin *sur dun*.

Maître Jacques Cœur lived at the farthest extremity of the little green Norman village, in a low, straggling house close to his own quarries. Mr. Graham found him seated on a stone bench outside, with the dappled light and shade of a pear-tree playing on his brown face and white cotton night-cap. He wore a blue blouse, faded in many a washing; his wiry, wrinkled hands told of exposure and hard work; he smoked his pipe in slow, leisurely puffs, like one who has earned his rest, and all the while he looked at a litle chubby granddaughter of his playing on the brink of a pool where some white ducks were swimming.

"That man is one of the richest in the place, and yet dresses like the poorest peasant in the village," thought Edward Graham, taking in Maître Jacques and all his surroundings at a glance; "he will be hard to deal with."

Never was anticipation more correct or more completely fulfilled than this.

"I believe you are Maître Jacques Cœur?" said Mr.

Graham, looking down at the brown face under its white headgear.

The owner of both face and nightcap took out his pipe and answered with grave facetiousness:

"People say so, at least."

"You deal in stone?" remarked Edward Graham, speaking point-blank.

Maître Jacques resumed his pipe, and nodded by way of reply. Your true Norman becomes wonderfully cautious and circumspect when he gets a scent of business. But Mr. Graham was essentially a direct man; moreover, he had little time to spare, and was determined to lose none, so he continued in the same strain of unequivocal frankness:

"I want good stone, and have been directed to you as likely to let me have it on reasonable terms."

Maître Jacques emitted a puff of blue smoke, and said not one word. Mr. Graham began to feel provoked.

"Perhaps I have been misdirected, and that you do not sell stone."

Maître Jacques took out his pipe, and said, leisurely:

"Who else sells it, then?"

Mr. Graham's dark brows knit.

"This is not business," he replied, "and I have no time to spare. Maître Jacques, do you sell stone, or do you not?"

He knit his eyebrows, as we said, but Maître Jacques raised his, as much as to say, "Verily, this is an impatient young man."

"How much stone do you want?" he condescended to inquire.

"How do you sell it?" was the retort.

"Now, just listen," said Maître Jacques, taking out his pipe, laying it on his knee, and looking at his little granddaughter, who was chasing the ducks. "I have all the stone in Saint Aubin, and you ask me how I sell it. Where is the use, since you must buy from me?"

"I suppose there are boats on the sea that can bring stone to the port of Saint Aubin?" sharply retorted Mr. Graham.

"Where is the use?" mildly argued Maître Jacques. "You will find that I sell the stone as cheap as it is needful for no one to bring it to Saint Aubin."

"I understand; but be so kind as to tell me at what rate you sell the cubic metre."

"You will not find it dear," placidly answered Maître Jacques, yawning slightly.

"Very likely; but I wish to know what I spend."

"Do you want stone?" inquired Maître Jacques, looking logical. "Yes," he answered for Mr. Graham, "you do. Well, then, I say, you must buy it from me, for no one else has any stone to sell in Saint Aubin."

"I ask you at what rate you sell it," said Mr. Graham, ignoring the line of argument with cool contempt—"how much you charge for the cubic metre just as it comes from the quarry?"

"Where am I to send it to?" asked Maître Jacques, after a long pause, which Mr. Graham had thought to be devoted to mental calculation. He fairly lost patience, and turned his back on the owner of the quarries of Saint Aubin.

"Where is the use?" calmly ejaculated Maître Jacques, resuming his pipe; "he must come back, you know—no one else has any stone to sell."

But Maître Jacques was mistaken. Mr. Graham's attempt had been made to please his aunt; he had got rid of it, and felt as if the burden of some incubus had been removed from his shoulders. "There is no building without stone," he argued to himself; "and, as there is no getting stone out of that impracticable Norman, the turret is an impossibility. Aunt must see that."

In his vexation with Maître Jacques, Mr. Graham, instead of turning back, had walked on, not caring whither he went. He soon found himself on the very brink of the quarries which gave their owner such power in the matter of stone. There they lay beneath him, white precipices, deep and wide, crowned with soft verdure, and opening a noble prospect of the distant sea, now getting very deep and blue in the waning afternoon. A sound of voices made Mr. Graham look round—his aunt was coming toward him, with Lily Bertram skipping by her side. She was not slip-shod, as usual, and was necessarily much lighter-footed.

"Well," breathlessly cried Mrs. Graham, rushing into the subject uppermost in her mind, "is not that beautiful stone, Ned?"

"*My* house was built of that stone," said Lily, putting in her word; "wasn't it, Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Graham assented with civil coldness, and, a big moth having passed by them, Lily, with a cry of eager joy, rushed after it in hot pursuit.

"Don't hurt it, my dear," expostulated Mrs. Graham.

"Oh, no!" answered Lily, still running.

"Well, you have seen Maître Jack What's-his-name?" eagerly remarked Mrs. Graham, fastening her bright-blue eyes full on her nephew's face.

"Yes, aunt, I have, and there is no dealing with the man. He cannot be made to name his terms. I understand why Mr. Bertram himself could not do it."

Mrs. Graham's expressive face fell. She had made Maître Jacques's quarries the goal of her afternoon walk, under Lily's guidance, for the express purpose of looking at the stone out of which the turret was to be built. It seemed as if by this personal inspection she could help Edward Graham in some fashion. She now, after hearing a full account of his interview with Maître Jacques, tried to argue him out of the impression he had received. "He must have been mistaken," reasoned Mrs. Graham; "the man must wish to sell."

"True," replied her nephew; "but on his own terms, and in a way which, for a foreigner, at least, made dealings with him impracticable.—This is a slow place and a slow race, auntie," said Edward Graham, by way of conclusion; "people here spend hours in driving bargains, and days in the splitting of straws. Granted that I can get the better of this man's insolence, am I to have as much trouble with every other Norman that I deal with? Why, then, I would rather build the Tower of Babel than Mr. Bertram's turret."

Mrs. Graham looked utterly disconcerted, and in a most doleful tone said that she supposed so. Her nephew was sorry for her disappointment, but he thought he had convinced her that further efforts were waste of time. Mrs. Graham soon showed him his mistake. The good lady, who had a trick of picking up every stray waif that came in her way, had just pounced upon a bit of twine lying on the road, and was tying it up neatly, and with evident satisfaction, preparatory to putting it in her pocket, when Lily came back, without the moth, but, very unexpectedly, with Mr. Cowper, easy, pleasant, lounging, and good-humored as ever.

Now, it had happened, much to Edward Graham's satis-

faction, but also to his surprise, that since his arrival in Saint Aubin he and Mr. Cowper had not once met. Mr. Cowper, who had professed such tender admiration for the fair Lily Scot—who had brought her her birds, who was Mr. Lennard's guest—had managed to keep clear of her mother's house.

"Why, Mr. Cowper," cried Mrs. Graham, on seeing him, "where have you been? This is my first sight of you, and I have been here—" She paused in doubt.

"Four days," suggested Lily, promptly.

"And even Ned has not seen you."

"My friend Ned Graham and I have not the same haunts," replied Mr. Cowper. "I, in true British fashion, frequent the reading-room, and try to carry my *lares* with me; whereas, he is up to the ears in Saint Aubin architecture."

"Oh! but you know all about the people!" cried Mrs. Graham, with sudden ardor, "and you can render me such a service. Do come with me, Mr. Cowper, and let us have a talk with an old Norman who owns all this stone, and won't sell it, nor say how much it costs. Ned could make nothing of him. It is not two minutes hence."

Mr. Cowper looked slightly surprised, but, too courteous to utter a nay, howsoever politely worded, to a lady's request, he walked away with Mrs. Graham, whose nephew, unsuspicious of so indiscreet an attempt at interference on her part, and glad to be relieved from the presence of his *bête-noire*, had allowed himself to be lured by Miss Bertram out of the path into a field hard by. She wanted to show him an ant-hill, and he wanted not to look at Richard Cowper. Lily described the ant-hill to him not only as the most wonderful in all Saint Aubin *sur dun*, but as the most remarkable ant-hill that had ever been. No such ants as these, so clever, so active, so industrious, according to Lily, had ever existed. Mr. Graham listened to her without heeding her much, then, suddenly raising his downcast eyes, he saw before him the green landscape and precipitous quarries with the far-away sea, all bathed in golden sunset, but no token of either his aunt or Mr. Cowper. Lily at once volunteered information. Her keen, young ears had heard Mrs. Graham's request and Mr. Cowper's assenting reply, and she now said, composedly:

"Oh! Mrs. Graham and Mr. Cowper have gone to see

Maître Jacques Cœur about the price of stone; because," kindly added Lily, unconscious of harm, "you could make nothing of Maître Jacques."

Edward Graham turned red and bit his lips, but said nothing, and waited for his aunt's return. It was lucky, however, that when Mrs. Graham came back, triumphant, at the end of ten minutes, which seemed sixty to her nephew's impatience—it was lucky, we say, that Mr. Cowper was not with her. He had gone on to Saint Aubin *sur dun*, being, said Mrs. Graham, rather pressed for time.

"But, perhaps, we can overtake him," cried Lily. "I wish to talk to Mr. Cowper—you should not have let him go, Marraine."

She looked vexed, and was so. To have lost the moth had been a disappointment, but to have found Mr. Cowper had been a sort of compensation; and, now that he was gone, Lily felt aggrieved.

"On my word," said Mrs. Graham, more amused than offended, "I should not have let him go, should not I? Well, well, Miss Lily—"

"Don't!" interrupted Lily, throwing her arms round the old lady's neck. "I knew I was wrong, but I *do* like Mr. Cowper; and he always runs away from me."

If Mr. Graham had not been full of his grievance, he could not have helped thinking that for once he and Mr. Cowper were of one mind.

"Never mind if he does," philanthropically replied Mrs. Graham; "don't you pursue him, that's all. Depend upon it, my dear, it is not for nothing that Apollo runs after Daphne, and not Daphne after Apollo.—Well, Ned, thanks to Mr. Cowper, I know all about it—you can have stone, beautiful stone," said Mrs. Graham, emphatically—"for—dear me, I have forgotten; but it was so cheap, said Mr. Cowper—only a few francs the cubic metre, Ned."

She spoke triumphantly, and was surprised at her nephew's rigid face and gloomy brow.

"Stone!" cried Lily, all alive with curiosity—"do you want the stone for the turret, Mr. Graham?"

"I want no stone, Miss Bertram," he answered, coldly; "but I like to know the value of these things; and I am much obliged to my aunt and Mr. Cowper."

Lily parted the hair back from her forehead and looked

at him rather earnestly, then remained thoughtful for two minutes, during which the three walked silently on toward the town; then, seeing another moth, she ran away with the eager cry—

"I'll have that one!"

"Is she not to know?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"There is nothing to hide, aunt."

"Perhaps the stone is too dear, after all," ejaculated Mrs. Graham, looking uneasy. "I suppose it would take many a cubic metre—what barbarous words these Normans have! Still, I think you can manage it, Ned, if you like."

"I have nothing to manage, aunt. I will have nothing to do with Mr. Bertram's turret, or with these people, that is all."

Mrs. Graham, who had just picked out a remarkable-looking pebble from a heap by the road-side, let it drop and roll away in her surprise.

"Ned," she said, mildly, "what ails you?"

"Nothing, auntie, save that it cannot be. On my word, it cannot."

He spoke gently and firmly—so firmly that blank dismay appeared on his aunt's face, but "I am very sorry" was all she said.

"I've got him!" cried Lily, running back to them in great haste.

"Don't hurt him, my dear," said Mrs. Graham, absently.

"Oh! now that I have seen him, he may go."

Lily kindly opened her fingers, and the moth fluttered off, and Mrs. Graham picked up the pebble and put it in her pocket, and Edward Graham walked on by her side and kept repeating to himself, "I wonder how much it was the cubic metre," and making internal calculations.

CHAPTER XI.

His vexation at the unwarranted interference of his aunt in thus introducing the man whom he disliked into his private concerns had made Mr. Graham say more than he

really felt. He found this out when he cooled down, and was once more alone, eating his solitary dinner in the City of Jerusalem. What though it was Mr. Cowper who had made Maître Jacques Cœur speak? Information was none the worse for passing through him. A few francs the cubic metre showed that stone was cheap in Saint Aubin. In justice to himself—in justice to his aunt, who had set her heart on this matter—should he not ascertain the price of timber, and see Maître Louis Renaud, the carpenter, at once, and have done with that matter before the next morning? Of course, it would all end in nothing, and he could settle down once more to his quiet study of Saint Aubin architecture, with no distracting thoughts of Mr. Bertram's turret. In short, Mr. Graham would not give up Hope without first exhausting all her lures.

Maître Louis Renaud lived in a sort of suburb, half town, half country, which straggled along the sea-shore. He had a shop there, and behind it a large yard full of timber, where Mr. Graham found him, with a lantern in his hand, searching and groping in the dust and shavings for some tool that had gone astray. In answer to Edward Graham's inquiries, a boy in the shop had directed him to the yard, unceremoniously informing him that "he would find the patron there," but not seeming to care to go with him.

The patron, or master, was, or seemed to be by his language, in a perfect frenzy of wrath. Oaths thick as hailstones, ominous of import as lightning, and growled forth in a voice of thunder, fell from his lips with a rapidity that startled even Mr. Graham, cool though he usually was. The threats which Maître Louis poured on the unknown "miserable" who had laid his tool astray were enough, if they could have been fulfilled, to make the hair of the most phlegmatic stand on end with horror. "To tear his nails off," was the ferocious wish which the patron repeated often enough to show that such would have been his favorite mode of punishment, could he have inflicted it; and all the time he flitted about the yard with his lantern, unconscious of the vicinity of a stranger.

"I will tear your nails off when I get you!" said Maître Louis Renaud, savagely. "I will tear them off one by one—I will—" Here the carpenter, suddenly turning round, found himself face to face with Edward Graham. A man of busi-

ness is born such, as well as a poet. In a moment Maître Louis Renaud knew not merely that Edward Graham had come on business, but also on what particular business he had come. He raised his lantern; the light flashed across his visitor's face and figure, and showed his own thin visage and wiry frame; then, dropping wrathful objurgations, angry search for his tool, and threats of vengeance, with amazing suddenness, Maître Louis said, in a smooth tone, from which all the growling had vanished:

"Monsieur wants a talk with me—with great pleasure. I moved the brown house, as monsieur knows, and Monsieur Bertram and I have had many a conversation about his house and the turret. Will monsieur come this way?"

He crossed the yard, and led his visitor to a little parlor at the back of his shop, where a light was burning. He handed Edward Graham a chair, took one himself, took out his pocket-book and pencil, and sat with his little cunning gray eyes winking expectantly up in Edward Graham's face.

Maître Jacques had been provokingly reticent and slow, but the young architect began to suspect that Maître Louis might be irritatingly sharp and eager.

"I only want to trouble you with one or two questions," he replied, guardedly.

"You want to know about the timber and carpentering for Monsieur Bertram's turret," said Maître Louis, point-blank. "Well, I knew you would be coming this evening, so I got all the calculations ready."

"And, pray, how could you know this?" asked Edward Graham, sharply.

Maître Louis smiled mysteriously. "It was useless to explain to monsieur," he said; "but, as monsieur saw, he did know it." But monsieur, unreasonable man, had been vexed because Maître Jacques would give him no information; and he was now annoyed because Maître Louis was too ready with his. The man's manner and appearance, also, displeased him exceedingly. His little, spiteful, though decidedly clever face gave a sort of reality to the vicious wishes and wicked swearing which Edward Graham had overheard in the yard; then the suddenness of the change in his tone and bearing from fury to civility was ominous; people who calm down on such short notice can fire up, too, on warning as brief. Was it wise, was it prudent in him, Edward

Graham, a foreigner, ignorant of the ways of the country, to have dealings with such a man as this? In a moment the young man answered his own question—it was not; and he would not do it.

While these thoughts passed through him, Maître Louis, not seeming to read the mistrust expressed in the grave face and bent brows of his visitor, thrust a dirty paper, covered with figures, before him, and said, eagerly:

"Monsieur will see how reasonable it is. My timber does not come from Norway. I buy it from Baron Mérigny, a worthy gentleman, who lives ten leagues off, and who would not cheat a baby. I season it myself, and I have here the very beams and boards that will do for Monsieur Bertram's turret. If monsieur will come into the yard and look at them, he will see that they are the very thing."

And, before Edward Graham could object, he had started up, seized the light, opened the door, and stood on the threshold, all eagerness and ardor to display his timber.

"You are very kind," said Mr. Graham, without moving. "I only want to know about the moving of the brown house. I am an architect, and the subject is interesting to me."

Maître Louis Renaud showed no disappointment, no surprise, but he just moved the candle he held, so that its light fell on Mr. Graham's face; then he came back to his place, sat down, and remained silent for a few seconds, like a chess-player startled by some unexpected move of his adversary.

"I am at monsieur's service," he at length said, civilly. "I saw monsieur drawing the brown house, and, if monsieur will tell me when he goes there again, I will be there too, and explain it all to monsieur on the spot."

This was said very simply, yet Mr. Graham felt trapped. He submitted, however, with a good grace, and, saying that he would be at the brown house the next morning, he rose, apologizing for his intrusion, and prepared to leave. Edward Graham's hand was on the door, when Maître Louis laid his forefinger on the arm of his visitor, and, looking up into his face, said, with a shrewd wink:

"Timber and work are dear here, but I make concessions to good customers; and, monsieur being an architect, I would make concessions to him."

"You are very good," replied Edward Graham.

"You will not tell Monsieur Bertram?"

"I have nothing to say to him."

"The concessions would be enormous," whispered Maître Louis, "and the work superb; and I would take care that Maître Jacques did not overcharge monsieur."

Edward Graham fumbled at the lock.

"And, excuse me," resumed the carpenter, still detaining him, "you could not come to terms with Monsieur Gentil, I know; and Maître Jacques Cœur, with whom I saw you talking awhile ago"—("I do believe the man has been watching me," thought Edward Graham)—"would give you trouble—leave you a whole month without stone; you do not know the man. No, it would never answer to do that yourself; but there is a builder, a good, meek, honest man, who would not cheat a baby—a little builder in a small way, and in the next town, who could work on your plan, of course—do as you bid him, that and no more, and be as reasonable for you as for one of us, not charge you a sou more, though you are a foreigner; and, if you like, I will tell you more about him tomorrow, at the brown house."

"Good-evening, Maître Louis," impatiently answered Edward Graham, walking out.

"You could see him this very evening, if you liked," continued Maître Louis. "I know that he is in Saint Aubin."

"Good-evening, Maître Louis."

And Edward Graham walked away, and would hear no more; but more of another kind, nevertheless, he was destined to hear. As he turned round the corner of the wooden palings which fenced in the carpenter's timber-yard, he heard Maître Louis again searching for his missing tool, and again swearing at the delinquent, and this time deeds as well as words seemed to accompany his objurgations, for a loud, sharp, boyish cry, speedily hushed, was heard in the quiet night.

"There is Maître Louis beating his 'prentice again," muttered a woman who was passing by.

The cry was not repeated, and Mr. Graham made his way to Mrs. Scot's house. He was not expected, but he had received a general invitation, and thought it only civil to avail himself of it. Four days of his fifteen were now gone by, and there was no reason why he should deny himself the pleasure of spending an evening in a pretty girl's company. Mr. Graham was so far candid with himself that he knew

what drew him to the house of Mrs. Scot. The lady herself he barely tolerated, his aunt he could have in England, little Miss Bertram was a nuisance, and the two youthful Misses Scot were nonentities, but Lily Scot was fair to see and delightful to listen to, though she said very little, and charming to sit near when one had the chance. He would make the best of these days he had to stay; and if that were not wisdom, what was?

And so Mr. Graham went to Mrs. Scot's house, and there spent as pleasant an evening as he had expected. Mrs. Scot, indeed, was not very well, and lay on her sofa, and thence prosed away, unmercifully bestowing on her visitor all the Saint Aubin gossip.

"Of course, you know the news, Mr. Graham," she said, barely giving him time to sit down, and drawing away his reluctant look from the little round table where the clear light of the lamp shone on the fair face of her daughter; "do give us your candid opinion—now do. I am sure you are unprejudiced, and will decide quite fairly."

"I beg your pardon, but I really do not know on what I am to decide, Mrs. Scot."

"Well, but it took place in the reading-room on the quay, you know," argued Mrs. Scot, as if this line of logic were irrefutable.

But Mr. Graham knew nothing of the reading-rooms, had not even entered them since his arrival. Mrs. Scot was lost in amazement. She was so surprised that she almost forgot to tell him the history of the reading-room transaction, on which she wished him to pass judgment; and it is just possible that her astonishment at the extraordinary fact, that Mr. Graham had actually been four days in Saint Aubin and not entered the reading-rooms, may have helped to take away from the perspicuity of her narrative.

"You see," she said, suddenly rushing into the middle of the subject, and, like a true partisan, waving her standard and showing her colors at once, "I say that Mr. Cowper was really not to blame. Of course, the *Times* supplement is very nice reading, but that is just why Mrs. Robin wanted it. As to Mr. Foster's making a fuss, why, he is fussy, you know, Mr. Graham. You must have noticed it. What! you don't know Mr. Foster? Dear me, I thought every one knew him. As to Mr. Cowper, it is all so like his good-na-

ture, that I wonder any one can blame him—I really do; and it is too bad of Mrs. Greenacre to throw the blame on him just because she cannot bear Mrs. Robin; and he wanted to please her. Now, Mr. Graham, what is your opinion of it all?"

The name of Mr. Cowper was sufficient to darken Mr. Graham's brow, flush his cheek, and even alter the tones of his voice, as he coldly pleaded ignorance as to who was right and who was wrong.

"Oh! but it all lies in a nutshell," cried Mrs. Scot, waxing warm, and giving a little sniff of annoyance at Mr. Graham's dullness; "and, though I may not tell a story well, Mrs. Randolph declares no one tells it more clearly than I do. My sister-in-law never *would* understand my letters; but when people will not understand, why, they will not," triumphantly added Mrs. Scot. "As to Mrs. Robin, poor soul, if she did wish to read the *Times* supplement, why should she not get it?"

"Because she is no subscriber, to be sure," roundly remarked Mrs. Graham, looking up from the stocking she was knitting.

"But where would have been Mr. Cowper's good-nature, if she had been a subscriber?" cried Mrs. Scot, again triumphant. "You can't get out of that, Mrs. Graham."

Having gored her opponent with the horns of this dilemma, Mrs. Scot luckily digressed about Mrs. Robin. How did Mr. Graham like her? Not know her! Why, she lived in the house next to the reading-rooms—that large white house, with a hair-dresser's shop—very odd for a superior person like Mrs. Robin to live above a hair-dresser's shop, and then that vicinity had brought on the ill-will between her and Mrs. Greenacre, the owner of the reading-rooms; but that, too, was Mrs. Robin's fault. She would treat Mrs. Greenacre as if she were a lady. "And we all told her how it would end," triumphantly declared Mrs. Scot. "There is a class of persons, Mr. Graham, whom one can—not, whom one positively can—not raise above their position, or allow, so to speak, to get beyond the parlor. Let them into your drawing-room, and you are ruined. They misbehave themselves without even knowing it."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose with one of her knitting-needles, and looked puzzled.

"Well, I suppose so," she said, with perfect *naïveté*. "I dare say, now, Mrs. Scot, that if you and I were to get into a duchess's drawing-room, we should misbehave ourselves without knowing it."

"My dear Mrs. Graham, how ridiculous!" cried Mrs. Scot, rising up in indignant amazement.

"Well, it is ridiculous to fancy ourselves there at all," good-humoredly confessed Mrs. Graham—"at least, a duchess would think so. Yet, do you know, Mrs. Scot, I don't think there is so much difference between people. I did know a countess—a real earl's wife and baronet's daughter; I mention no names—and she was as little a vulgar, rolly-polly sort of a woman as you ever saw."

"But, my dear Mrs. Graham," laughed, or rather sniffed, Mrs. Scot, "what has that to do with Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Greenacre? I can't see the analogy, I assure you."

"Can't you?" said Mrs. Graham, again rubbing her nose with the knitting-needle.

"No, I really can not," replied Mrs. Scot, sniffing again; and she would have said more, but luckily tea and little Miss Bertram both came in, and Mr. Cowper, the reading-rooms, and Mrs. Robin and Mrs. Greenacre, were put by, and resumed no more.

The rest of the evening was spent after a fashion more congenial to Edward Graham; for Mrs. Scot dozed when she had taken her tea, and the young man, putting by unwelcome thoughts and eschewing unpleasant themes, made himself so agreeable that Lily Scot's dark eyes beamed softly, and Lily Bertram, leaning on the little round table with her two elbows resting upon it, and her full young face half buried in her hands, looked and listened, and for once quite forgot to talk, unless toward the close of the evening, when she whispered rather too audibly in Miss Scot's ear, "How clever he is!" to which, blushing a little, Lily answered with a soft, "Hush, darling!"

Mrs. Graham was delighted to see her nephew in such good spirits, and, as she never lost sight of her own ideas, she rapidly concluded that she had misunderstood him, and that, after all, matters were secretly tending toward the goal of her wishes. She was so full of this, that, when he took his leave and went away, she followed him out—"in order to see what sort of a night it was," she averred, but, in reality, in

order to whisper in his ear, as he stood on the threshold of Mrs. Scot's dwelling, with the dark street before him:

"I see that something new has turned up, Ned—what is it?"

"Nothing, aunt, save that I shall never be Mr. Bertram's man."

He spoke almost sharply. The question jarred upon him; it reminded him unpleasantly that he must leave Saint Aubin no better off in fame or money than he had entered it.

"Well, I am sorry," emphatically replied his aunt, still speaking low, though they were alone, Sarah having left them to light the lantern which had suddenly gone out; "for, do you know, I think Mr. Cowper has an eye to Lily, after all. You heard her mother talking about him."

Here Sarah came back, and Mr. Graham hurried off, saying:

"Good-night, auntie.—Never mind me, my good girl; I want no light—no, no, I will have none; I know the road."

And, indeed, he was half-way down the street as he spoke.

"What a lively gentleman!" said Sarah, admiringly.

"Yes, he has a good pair of legs," answered his aunt, proudly.

"So *he* wants her, does he?" bitterly thought Edward Graham, as he went on in the darkness. "And suppose he does, what is it to me?—and how can I help it?"

It was past ten when Mr. Graham reached the Cité de Jérusalem, and past ten was late for Saint Aubin. Nevertheless, the girl who lit his candle and handed him his key informed him that monsieur—and she nodded toward a plain middle-aged man sitting on a chair in the *salle*, with his stick between his knees—had been waiting for him this hour. The man rose, and, looking at Edward Graham with a very straightforward look that matched with his guileless, ruddy face, apologized for his intrusion, but he must leave Saint Aubin early the next morning, and so he had taken the liberty of waiting on monsieur this evening. Edward Graham took in the whole man at a glance—hard work, exposure to wind and weather, and, withal, the substantial, independent air of a man who has money, were written in his aspect. "He is a builder, and he is sent by Maître Louis," thought the young architect, but, betraying neither his suspicion nor the annoyance it gave him, he asked his visitor to follow him up-

stairs, and showed him the way to his room. He put the candle on the high chimney-piece, where it flared away in the night air that came in through the open window, gave the stranger one of the Louis Quinze arm-chairs, took the other himself, and, leaning back in his seat, waited quietly till his guest should declare his errand.

"I am the builder," he said, bluntly.

"What builder?" perversely inquired Edward Graham.

"The builder whom Maître Louis Renaud mentioned to you two hours ago," the other answered, so simply that the young man felt rebuffed. "Perhaps he did not tell you my name," resumed the builder, his face brightening, as if he thus accounted to himself for his host's coldness—"Jean Merle—yes, my name is Jean Merle, and I live in Chaugy, ten leagues off. I am going home to-morrow, so I came this evening, and so, if you like it, we can talk about Monsieur Bertram's turret at once."

Edward Graham no longer hoped to prevent all Saint Aubin from connecting him with Mr. Bertram's turret, so he replied composedly that he would hear what Monsieur Merle had to say.

"Well, monsieur," began Monsieur Merle, clearing his throat, "I shall begin about myself. I have been a working-man; my hands"—and he stretched forth two large, brown, coarse hands, and laughed complacently as he displayed them—"can tell you as much. I am not ashamed of it. I can barely read or write—I am sorry for that; but I was not taught, and was put to work when I was ten years old, so there was no time for learning. Well, I married, and had a child, then another, and another, and so I bestirred myself, and did a little job for some one, then a little job for some one else, and so I became a builder, and now I know building thoroughly—yes, no man better; I can say that for myself—I can build."

Monsieur Jean Merle slapped his knee with hearty emphasis as he thus asserted that he could build, and looked delighted with his own eloquence.

"But I have never built anything save houses," he resumed. "You must not imagine, monsieur, that I am going to set myself up for what I am not. No; but if you tell me how to do a thing, I can do it as well and as cheap as any one—yes, as well as any man living," asserted Monsieur Merle,

kindling a little. "I know how to build, monsieur, from cellar to garret. I know how to build, and how to buy, too. I get stone cheap, good stone, and timber, good timber; and carpenters and masons must work well, or they will not do for me; and I know where to put my hand on carvers and sculptors when I want them, but I have never wanted them yet; and none attempt to impose upon me, because I have been a workman, and give fair wages, and will have good work, because work must be good, and a bargain is a bargain; and the man who does not stick to a bargain," said Monsieur Jean Merle, kindling again, "is no better than dirt, monsieur."

The man was very much in earnest. The night air that came in through the open window blew back the thin brown hair from his forehead; but Monsieur Jean Merle did not mind it. The flickering light of the candle fell on his full, harmless face, but Monsieur Jean Merle cared nought for that. He had nothing to hide; he was full of his subject, and did not even seem to see Edward Graham, though staring at him all the time.

"Pity he will not do," thought the young man, "he is so honest." "Well, Monsieur Merle," he said, aloud, "what do you propose, or rather suggest, about this matter? I expect it to end in nothing; but you have taken the trouble to call —I am willing to hear you."

Monsieur Merle's face fell a little as he heard him, but he rallied after a while, and expounded his ideas. These were few, simple, and clear as day. If Edward Graham would give him his designs and his plans, he, Monsieur Merle, would carry them out—build the turret from the cellar to the garret, undertake every dealing with sellers of stone and timber, with carpenters, smiths, glaziers, plumbers, carvers, and workmen of every description, and take on himself the responsibility of the success or failure of the whole affair.

"And you will find the capital for all this?" said Edward Graham.

"And I will find the capital for all this, of course," replied Monsieur Jean Merle triumphantly; "the workmen I shall pay in ready money, of course, but the others will take bills. My bills, monsieur, are as good as gold for twenty leagues round Saint Aubin."

Edward Graham's dark eyes lit for the first time.

"How charmingly everything would go on if Mr. Bertram would or could only spend enough upon that turret of his!" thought he. Then his look fell as suddenly as it had kindled—for was not that the root of the difficulty, the one obstacle which there was no getting over? Still the temptation was there, and the young man so far yielded to it as to expound a few of his ideas to the builder. He found that this plain, rough man, who lived ten leagues off, had already bestowed some attention on this hobby of Mr. Bertram's, and, though he honestly confessed that Monsieur Bertram had never said a word to him on the subject, it was evident that he, too, had been hankering after that Fata Morgana of a turret, and not been without secret hopes of encompassing it some day. The result of these ambitious aspirations was, that he knew more of the subject than Edward Graham, and could enlighten him in some matters of importance.

"A plain turret could easily be done for fifteen or sixteen thousand francs," said he; "and one such as you mean might cost fifty thousand—perhaps more and perhaps less. Do not shake your head at the money, monsieur. I know more than you do about all this. The Paris architect said it would cost two hundred thousand francs. Of course, the turret was to be splendid; and Monsieur Duhamel, who will build—though all he builds falls to pieces—wanted thirty thousand for a turret that would not have cost him half the money. So Monsieur Bertram, not knowing what to think, offers you twenty; but he has more than that to spend. He is rich, his daughter is rich, and Monsieur Lennard, her guardian, who wanted his nephew to have the job, has told all Saint Aubin that his ward could throw away seventy thousand francs, if she chose. So do not think the money the thing, monsieur; the thing," added Jean Merle, striking the table with his fist, "is, to have good stone, good timber, and good work, and I will see to that. I can get Jacques Cœur's stone for six francs the cubic metre. It might cost you two hundred by the time it were fit to use. It will not cost me one! I can get good timber cheap, monsieur, and I can deal with a workman who is a genius, and who will do all your fine carving cheap and well; and if you will give me some idea of the sort of carving you want, I will have a talk with him by next Monday, and I can tell you within a few hundred francs how much the turret will cost."

There was a curious sort of eloquence about this rough man—the eloquence of simple truth and honesty—and it told upon his listener, who, though young, had a keen insight into human nature. He listened to him with grave, attentive eyes, and in perfect silence, till the builder ceased, and the room was once more silent.

"I am only deluding myself," thought Edward Graham; but he took up a pencil and a sheet of paper, and before five minutes were over the two men were deep in the matter, and it was near midnight when they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE Miss Bertram was of a generous nature. When she had a good thing, she liked to share it with her friends; and Sister Martha being one of the best things she possessed, she had lost no time in dividing her with her adopted godmother, Mrs. Graham.

Love of the poor was Mrs. Graham's weakness. Her charity was large and tender. She fell in love with Sister Martha at once. She fell in love with the old men and the old women; she gave them snuff without stint; she bought them woollen jackets, petticoats, and stockings; and, to crown all, she promised them a treat, to which Lily Bertram, Lily Scot, and her sisters were invited.

The thought of this treat, we are sorry to say, so filled up Mrs. Graham's mind that for the time being it eclipsed all else. Her nephew had told her that he had seen a builder who seemed a very honest man, and that, on his dropping a hint to that effect, Mr. Bertram had graciously agreed "to have another talk with Mr. Graham on the subject of the turret." Mrs. Graham, who was as sanguine and as hopeful as a girl of fifteen, considered the matter all but settled, and gave herself up to her treat and to her old men and her old women *con amore*.

This treat required certain dainty viands, in the purchase of which Mrs. Graham was assisted by Lily Scot, and favored with the society of Miss Bertram.

"Oh! do let me go too, and look on while you buy!" that young lady had pleaded so pathetically, that a heart much harder than was Mrs. Graham's could not have resisted the appeal. So the three went off to the Basse-ville, Sarah following with a huge basket; and when they came back, the basket was not merely full, but Mrs. Graham was laden with parcels in white paper, which she would trust to none. Lily Scot walked by her side, carrying the daintiest little basket in the world, but which, though dainty, was thoroughly crammed; and Lily Bertram panted in the rear, bearing a large melon —she had asked it as a favor—and talking to Sarah all the way. Mrs. Graham was talking, too, and her mind, being at rest about the treat, so far, at least, as provisions went, reverted to her nephew and his prospects.

"We must make him come to the treat," she gayly said to Lily Scot. "If he settles in Saint Aubin, he must know the dear old people, must he not?"

Miss Scot brushed away a speck from her neat jacket, and asked, with modest composure, if Mr. Graham was going to settle in Saint Aubin.

"I am the greatest chatter-box there ever was!" cried Mrs. Graham, shaking her head at her infirmity. "Of course, I should not have said it; yet it is true. Ned and Mr. Bertram are all about that turret again, and Mr. Lennard is in it, and the end of it will be that Ned will fall in love with some Saint Aubin girl, and either stay here with her, or take her away with him. I wonder, now, which would be the better plan of the two—to stay and become the architect of the place, since that Monsieur D something is no good, or to go back to England, and fight his way up there with the turret to back him?"

"Is the matter of the turret settled?" asked Miss Scot, with gentle surprise.

"Yes, but do not say I told you so. Ned—poor fellow!—will like to tell you himself."

This was said pointedly, but Miss Scot brushed off another speck—the day was a dusty one—and walked on in dreamy silence by her godmother's side, till Mrs. Graham roused her by exclaiming, at the top of her voice, "Oh, there he is!" They had gone by Mrs. Scot's door on their way to the Asile, and were passing Mr. Bertram's, when Edward Graham walked out into the sunlit street.

"O Ned! my dear boy, I am so glad to catch you!" exclaimed Mrs. Graham. "Lily, my dear, will you and dear little Lily Bertram and Sarah take care of these things for me?" she added, surrendering her parcels with sudden indifference. "I just want to talk five minutes to my nephew." And, without giving Mr. Graham time to do more than bow to the young ladies, she seized his arm and marched off with him up the street, taking long strides, as was her wont, and forgetting the treat, and the old men and old women, in this revulsion of feeling.

"Oh! I'll go with them," cried Lily Bertram, eagerly, throwing her melon into Sarah's basket. "I have not seen Mr. Graham so long!"

And off she would have gone, if Miss Scot had not checked her with gentle seriousness.

"Well," said Mrs. Graham, almost excitedly, "is it settled at last? You said it was to be to-day."

"Yes, auntie, it is settled," said Mr. Graham, composedly.

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Graham, her lip quivering with a joy which, even in the bitterness of his own disappointment, filled Mr. Graham with regret for having deceived her, though for one moment only.

"My dear, kind aunt," he said, gently, "I meant that it was all over. Mr. Bertram and I cannot come to terms, and I am going back to England to-morrow."

Mrs. Graham stood still, and looked up at her nephew with a very blank face.

"You don't mean it?" she said at last.

"Auntie, I do. Such a turret as I should like to build would cost two thousand pounds, or fifty thousand francs. Mr. Bertram has twenty thousand francs to spend; Mr. Lennard would add twenty thousand more for his ward. Where are the missing ten thousand to come from?"

"And so you can't build the turret, and you can't marry Lily Scot," said Mrs. Graham, with a groan; "well, I am disappointed! But you can't go yet, Ned. I have promised to stay another fortnight."

"Auntie, I will come back to fetch you, with pleasure, but I must go to-morrow. I received a letter on business this very morning, and you know I must throw away none of my chances."

Mrs. Graham knew that very well, so she raised no objec-

tion. She was so subdued and downcast that she could scarcely utter more than a melancholy "My poor Ned, I am so sorry!" with which, as if all further discourse were useless, she turned back to Mrs. Scot's house. They parted at the door. Mrs. Graham entered the dining-room in a most depressed mood. She chose that apartment, which was usually deserted at that hour, in order to be alone there and brood over her vexation. But Miss Scot, who had seen her godmother enter the house, soon came with sweet solicitude to know what ailed her.

"I am afraid you are not well, Marraine," gently said Lily Scot, looking at Mrs. Graham, whose kindly face indeed wore a meaning of unusual gloom.

"My dear, I am disappointed," answered Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "Edward is going away to-morrow, and it spoils my treat."

Miss Scot, who had guessed as much, did not reply, but looked dreamily out of the dining-room window, by which she was standing. Of course, he must go; of course, that talk of the turret had all come to nothing; but what a pity it was; and so, looking dreamily out of the window at the flagged court and the green garden with its bright patches of color, she sighed to herself, and felt a little disappointed—only a little. Not that she did not value Mr. Graham rightly, but because she had never allowed herself to hope that anything would come of his evident admiration, and of Mrs. Graham's broad hints.

"I am so provoked," said Mrs. Graham. "Why will he go?"

"Perhaps he must," suggested Lily.

"Why will he not stay and build that turret for Mr. Bertram?"

"And would not Mr. Graham do that?" asked Lily, slightly raising her fine, dark eyebrows.

"Ned is very pig-headed," testily resumed Mrs. Graham. "I offered him money to go on with, a builder offered him unlimited credit—unlimited, my dear—and he would not come to terms with Mr. Bertram."

"Perhaps he could not," suggested Lily, earnestly; "perhaps Mr. Bertram cannot afford it. That turret would cost a great deal of money, Marraine, and Mr. Graham knows it."

"So he says—so he says!" impatiently exclaimed Mrs. Graham. "He saw all the people, he tells me, and he had their figures; and he went to Mr. Bertram, and Mr. Bertram went to him, and he back again to Mr. Bertram, and they could not agree—which is all nonsense. Why should they not agree?"

Lily smiled, rather faintly, but still she smiled, for she could bear it; and Mrs. Graham, though pleased to see her so collected and easy, liked her none the better for her composure. She had constructed a romance of her own about Lily and her nephew, and she felt discomfited at its failure. It was evident to her now not merely that Edward Graham could not stay in Saint Aubin to build Mr. Bertram's turret, but that, so far as Lily was concerned, it mattered little whether he did stay or not. Miss Scot was not smitten. "I suppose it is all as it should be," ruefully thought Mrs. Graham, "but I should like Lily to have more heart."

Miss Scot did not suspect the hard construction which Mrs. Graham put upon her composure; she had seen Mr. Graham's admiration, and she had liked it; she had listened to Mrs. Graham's indiscreet hints, half with pleasure and half with annoyance. For a little while she had allowed a faint fluttering hope that something pleasant would come out of all this to creep round her heart. Now hope had departed, and Lily Scot could look after her rather wistfully, perhaps, but she was not the girl to break her heart because that faithless bird of promise had opened her wings and fled forevermore. "It was sure to end so," was her sad, resigned thought, as she went about her household tasks, a little pensively, but not more sadly than it behooved a wise girl.

Mr. Graham felt it more keenly. He had been nearer fruition than Miss Scot; his, moreover, was a double venture and a double wreck. Love had spurred ambition on, and ambition had quickened love. To build Mr. Bertram's turret, if possible, was not merely a thing to be done for Lily's sake; it was also to take rank at once with the foremost men, even as to wear Lily Scot in his bosom was to have won one of life's prizes—a prize as soothing to man's pride as the building of any turret that was ever reared by man's hands. To lose at once the rewards of ambition and love was very hard. Mr. Graham would not, if he could have helped it, have gone near Mrs. Scot's house again. Where

was the use of looking at a girl who was not for him; whom some luckier man—Dick Cowper, perhaps—would be sure to win in the end? But civility, which has its martyrs as well as the heroic virtues, demanded that Edward Graham should bid Mrs. Scot adieu; and Mrs. Graham, who could be willful and obstinate, wrote to insist that he should spend this last evening with her. Mrs. Scot expected it, she said. And Edward Graham, with a vexed and impatient smile, yielded against his better judgment.

There was a miserable pleasure, no doubt, in passing an hour in Lily Scot's company; but such pleasures are generally dearly bought, and this evening was in every sense a failure. It was not merely painful, but dull. Mrs. Scot was sleepy, and thought Mr. Graham's presence something of a bore. He was going neither to build Mr. Bertram's turret nor to marry Lily, and she would rather have had a nod than his society. Mr. Graham himself, though he made praiseworthy efforts to talk unconcernedly, was not enough of the man of the world to be quite successful. Miss Bertram gave him depressed looks, and grieved over his going away with Jane and Louisa (in suppressed tones, of course), who, though more callous, also looked slightly impressed. Mrs. Graham was neither as good-humored nor as cheerful as she might have been, and Lily Scot alone looked almost the same as usual. A faint difference there might be, but, though Mr. Graham was quick to detect the tender seriousness of her smile, his aunt did not perceive it, and again felt offended at her goddaughter's coldness.

Mr. Graham stayed an hour. When the clock struck ten, he rose.

"So soon!" cried Mrs. Scot, who had been nodding.

"I have to be up at four to-morrow morning," said Mr. Graham.

"At four!" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, looking scared. "Oh, dear me!"

"Mr. Graham does not mind, mamma," remarked Lily Scot, smiling.

"I suppose some one wakens him," whispered Lily Bertram, rising on tiptoe to reach the ear of her friend, who gently said, "Hush!"

"Lily is always supposing something," said Jane to Louisa, with a giggle.

"Yes, I am very fond of supposing," candidly acknowledged Miss Bertram.

In the mean while, Mr. Graham, having taken leave of Mrs. Scot, came up to her eldest daughter, who rose, quiet, courteous, and, to all seeming, very calm indeed.

"I wish she would not be so cool!" indignantly thought Mrs. Graham, snapping her thread very short.

But Miss Scot was not so cool as she looked. She had seen Mr. Graham's suppressed regret, she understood its meaning, and it touched her more than she knew herself, till came this last moment of a parting which must, she felt, be final. Her fine feminine instinct told her that he was a man incapable of trifling with her, and that, if he left her so, it was because he could not help himself. And yet it was a pity. Young Thomson could not compare with Mr. Graham; and to think of William would at all times have been a folly; but Mr. Graham, gentlemanlike, honorable, and full of ardor for his profession, of an agreeable presence and pleasant manners, was not the sort of lover whom Lily could hope to find again in a hurry; so, when they stood face to face and shook hands, and said good-by, and exchanged good wishes, there was an involuntary softness in her dark eyes which Mrs. Graham did not see, but which added a pang to her nephew's keen regret. His look lingered on that sweet, fair face, which he was to see no more; his hand pressed that little, gentle hand, which he would have so liked to keep, with a sort of passion, then dropped it so abruptly that Lily blushed and stooped to pick up something that had not fallen; and as he hurried away, forgetting his aunt in his fear of betraying himself, he thought, "I might have had her—yes, I might have had her."

"Edward!" exclaimed his aunt, as he reached the door.

"O auntie! I beg your pardon," he cried, coming back to her with a heightened color.

"Never mind, my dear boy," she whispered, as he kissed her cheek. "Bless you, I am not angry—I know."

This last remark, being uttered in rather a loud key, did not tend to restore Mr. Graham's composure, but he made the best of his forgetfulness—he laughed, or tried to laugh, looked at Lily Scot again, and, bidding them all once more good-by, he was gone. A dead silence followed his de-

parture. Lily Scot worked slowly, Mrs. Graham stitched vigorously, Mrs. Scot looked half asleep.

"Is Mr. Graham an early riser?" she asked, at length.

"A very early riser," emphatically replied Mrs. Graham.

Another dead silence followed. Suddenly Lily Bertram looked up from the book of which she had been turning over the pages, and remarked, as if struck with the thought:

"Marraine, when will Mr. Graham come back to Saint Aubin?"

"Never," replied Mrs. Graham, with a sort of triumph in her look and tone. She was still angry with Lily for being so cool.

"Never!" echoed Miss Bertram, seeming dismayed. "Oh! I am so sorry."

"No, never," repeated a sorrowful voice in Lily Scot's heart—"never; he loved me, and I could have liked him, and his wife will be a very happy woman; but he is poor, and I am penniless, and he will never come back."

And Edward Graham, going down the street, had his own hard thoughts; for he met Dick Cowper, who stopped him, and, regardless of his short answers, would condole on his disappointment.

"Very vexatious," he said, kindly; "but, bless you, my dear fellow, I could have told you as much. Mr. Bertram has the money, but he will not spend—a delightful man, but slow, slow. Going to-morrow! So sorry! You have been to bid the Scots good-by, I suppose? Are they alone?—no Pethericks, no Jekylls? Then I think I'll go in and spend an hour or two in the fair Lily's company."

And, with a cordial shake of the hand and friendly wishes for his journey, Mr. Cowper left Edward Graham, who, jealous and angry, walked back to the Cité de Jérusalem. "I am no better than the worn, defeated traveler," he thought, bitterly. "I should not wonder if that fellow will not build Mr. Bertram's turret, after all, since he meddles with building—ay, and marry her, too, I dare say."

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS abrupt and unexpected ending to her plans exasperated Mrs. Graham as much as that kind, genial lady could be exasperated. Her little romance had broken off at the very beginning—there was not even a second volume to her novel; the hero and the heroine of her story had parted in so easy and commonplace a fashion, that their meeting again was a matter of indifference to her. She had said that Edward Graham would never return to Saint Aubin. "But if he were to return to-morrow, I should not care," thought Mrs. Graham, still indignant, "for he has spoiled my treat—that is what he has done."

Yes, melancholy to record, the treat was a very flat affair. Mrs. Graham was out of sorts, Miss Scot was thoughtful, and Lily Bertram was wanting; a violent headache had consigned her to her bed. It may be that the old men and the old women, who had so long done with love, did not suspect this catastrophe in Mrs. Graham's love-story. We doubt even if they missed Lily Bertram. They were in that shady valley where a little sun more or less does not matter much to those who live far away from the airy heights of youth and gladness. Sister Martha herself, though sorry for her little friend's indisposition, philosophically remarked, "Oh! but it will be nothing," and thought no more about it.

"I shall never give another treat," angrily thought Mrs. Graham; "or, at least, if I do, I shall not go to it. Ned has behaved abominably; and Lily Scot is simply heartless."

Poor Lily! this was the reward of her self-control.

We will not say that Miss Scot had spent a sleepless night, but it was late when she did sleep, and it was early when she awoke. The daily regularity of her morning tasks remained unaltered, but she carried through them a sorrowful thought, which might have softened the bitterness of her godmother's censure, could the good lady have known it. The treat, moreover, gave her no pleasure, and though she did her best not to look dull, no one knew that the effort cost her something.

"He, too, liked me," thought Lily Scot, as, morning duties and treat being both over, she sat alone in the garden, seemingly intent on the little white collar she was stitching; "but

where is the use of being nice-looking and being liked? I had better make up my mind at once that such things are not for me; and yet it is a pity, for I could have liked him—oh! so well, I am sure—better than any one I have yet seen."

And as Miss Scot, though wise, was still young enough to have a day-dream now and then, she allowed her fancy to draw a retrospective picture of what might have been. First and foremost came a cottage in England. To live in England, and have a cottage there—near London, of course—was the ambition of this girl, born and reared in Saint Aubin. She pined for this unknown country with all the longings of an exile; and a cottage built by Edward Graham, on one of his own designs, with just a little green bit of a garden, would have been the summit of her ambition. How delightful to have had that little home to rule over and make nice for her husband; to watch for his coming at the garden-gate in the evening; to have him reading nice books while she stitched him perfect wristbands—in short, how charming to be married to a good, kind young man, and make him happy, and be made happy by him! Her mother and her sisters would have stayed in Saint Aubin, of course; but, of course, too, they would have paid her long and frequent visits, till Jane and Louisa married near her (Edward Graham's best friends), and Mrs. Scot took up her final home with her eldest daughter. Fond as she was of her mother and sisters, Lily could not help wishing for a home of her own at first; so, mentally consigning Mrs. Scot, Jane, and Louisa to the care of Sarah, she went off on her wedding-trip to the English lakes, and was softly gliding down Windermere, with Edward Graham rowing, when a step on the gravel made her look up, and she saw Edward Graham himself standing before her. Self-possessed though she was, Lily could not help blushing a little.

"I am afraid I have startled you," he said, hesitatingly; "but I am not gone, as you see, and I thought my aunt was here."

"She is in her room," replied Lily, with her pleasant smile; she had quite recovered her composure. "I shall go and tell her that you are here."

She rose, when, with outstretched hand and eager look and accent, Edward Graham exclaimed:

"No, pray do not!"

She stood irresolute before him, with her work in her hand; he gently took it from her and put it away, and Lily Scot, looking in his face, knew his meaning. She turned pale and waited. She was neither troubled nor flurried, but she could not help being moved; the great drama of her life had come at last, and her fate lay before her.

"When I bade you good-by last night, Miss Scot," said Edward Graham, betraying some emotion as he recalled that hard moment, "I did not hope to be so happy as to see you this morning; but I found Mr. Bertram at the Cité de Jérusalem; we came to an understanding, and my position is quite altered—I mean, that I have now a future before me which authorizes me to say that which I should not have presumed to say yesterday. I do not ask you to take me upon trust, but, indeed, Miss Scot, I think I am now a made man—I feel sure of success; and if you will give me a chance of you, I shall have nothing left to wish for. I do not ask you to pledge yourself; I cannot expect that," added Edward Graham, getting suddenly faint-hearted, for the sense of his presumption grew upon him as he looked at Miss Scot's sweet, serious face; "but give me a chance of you—pray do!"

A pretty, triumphant smile flickered on Lily's lips as she heard him—a suppliant, and pleading thus with mingled eagerness and fear for her favor. Her dark eyes sparkled, even though they looked away shyly. In a moment Edward Graham's faint-heartedness vanished; he saw that he had prevailed, and, wholly forgetting his protestations of humility, he asked eagerly to be taken upon trust after all. Lily had never meant to say him nay, and she did not do so; but, if Edward Graham had not loved her before, he would have loved her then for the modest grace with which her consent was given. All that she felt Lily said or implied—that, and no more. She was willing to become Mr. Graham's wife, and yet she let him understand that her preference was not such as to leave him nothing in her heart to win; and though, man-like, he loved her none the less because, while she gave much, she still withheld something, man-like, too, he jealously reproached her for her coldness.

"I know I have no right to expect more," he said, with a raised color, "but still it is hard."

"But, Mr. Graham," replied Lily, smiling, "you forget that you were going away last night for good, and that I was

never to see you again. Is it fair to be displeased because I did not give that which you had not asked for?"

"But what I longed for from the first moment I saw you!" he exclaimed, warmly: "Do not deny that you saw it—do not, Lily!"

His voice softened as he uttered her name for the first time; and Lily, seeing him thus moved, and listening for the first time, too, to love spoken, felt prouder and happier than she cared to show. She liked his jealous reproaches—she liked them dearly; they were dreadfully unjust, but very pleasant in her ear, and the look she gave him was so full of benignity and forgiveness, that Mr. Graham asked himself, with a sudden thrill of joy, if this coy girl did not like him better than she cared to confess, after all. In the imprudence of his happiness he might have told her so, if Miss Scot, who stood facing the path, to which his back was turned, had not exclaimed, in a quick, low voice:

"There is Miss Bertram!"

"Oh! I am so glad!" she cried, springing forward in mingled joy and amazement, and shaking back the hair from her face, as if to see Mr. Graham better; "I am so glad, Mr. Graham! Mrs. Graham said you were gone for good—I am sure it was that that gave me a headache—and that you would NEVER come back!" remarked Miss Bertram, with strong emphasis on the word "never."

Edward Graham tried to be courteous and good-humored, and to make a civil speech, but never had he found an interruption so vexatious as this.

"And are you going to stay?" asked Miss Bertram, sitting down on a garden-chair, with the evident intention of remaining where she was.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to stay—for some time, at least; then he suddenly remembered that he was late, and could not wait any longer for his aunt, and so he took his leave, to Miss Bertram's evident chagrin.

"I wish he had stayed," she said, plaintively, following the fugitive with a reproachful glance.

"Why, Lily, how partial you are to Mr. Graham," gayly remarked Miss Scot, who felt buoyantly happy just then, and who, moreover, rather enjoyed the discomfiture of her lover.

"Oh! I don't care so much about him," replied Lily Ber-

tram, a little affronted at the imputation; "but one never sees any one now, and that is dull."

"So you only care about Mr. Graham because you can have no one else," remarked Lily Scot, rather piqued.

"Yes," answered Miss Bertram, with perfect candor, "that is it. I like new faces, and his is the last new face, you know."

"How flattering to Mr. Graham!" shortly said Miss Scot.

"Oh! but you will not tell him?" cried Lily Bertram, alarmed. "Pray, do not tell him, Lily."

"And why should *I* tell him?" asked Miss Scot, dignified.

Did that personal pronoun "I" say too much?—had something or other wakened a vague suspicion in shrewd little Miss Bertram which Miss Scot's imprudently grave manner turned into certainty? There is no telling; but every one knows that there are no little girls in certain matters. In a moment Miss Bertram knew it all, and, jumping up and clapping her hands, she cried, in an ecstasy of delight, "Oh! I know, I know; and, Lily dear, I shall be bridesmaid!" throwing her arms around Miss Scot's neck as she said it; "and, oh!" with sudden and expressive dismay, "you will never tell him that I do not care so much about him, because it is not true, you know; and I only said it because he went away. So, promise you will never tell him—and, oh! Lily, when is it to be?"

Miss Scot tried to protest, to deny, or at least to imply denial, but for once she was defeated. The vehemence of Miss Bertram was a torrent which swept away every pebble, every brier from its path, and so, within half an hour of its having been uttered, Mr. Graham's great secret was in the possession of Lily Bertram, and all that Miss Scot could do was to swear her young confidante to inviolable secrecy.

It is but fair to declare that Miss Bertram fully intended to keep her promise, and to bury Miss Scot's involuntary confidence in the deepest recesses of her memory; but the same ill-luck which had revealed to her Mr. Graham's suit and its success, betrayed her knowledge of both to another person.

Miss Scot managed to get rid of her young companion as soon as she civilly could, by pleading that she wanted to go up to her room, a sanctum which none ever invaded; but not for this could Lily Bertram make up her mind to go back to

her own home. She loitered about the garden, exulting at her cleverness in guessing the truth, and hugging herself in the ownership of a secret so momentous as that now in her possession. "And no one but myself knows anything about it," proudly thought Miss Bertram.

"I thought Miss Scot was with you, miss," said the voice of Sarah, who suddenly appeared on the scene.

"Miss Scot is gone up to her room," replied Lily Bertram, seriously. Even Sarah knew nothing about it.

The nurse gave her a sharp look. It was not Miss Scot's hour for going up to her room, and Sarah, to say the truth, had seen Mr. Graham leave the house abruptly some ten minutes before, and felt inquisitive. Now, Sarah no more than any one else invaded Miss Scot's privacy, so she looked vexed, and said:

"Miss Scot's wanted."

Lily Bertram pursed up her lips.

"Who wants her?" she asked.

"Some one who has a right, miss," tartly replied Sarah.

"Is it Mr. Graham?" inquired Miss Bertram, eagerly; "because if it's Mr. Graham, perhaps Miss Scot would come down."

The gypsy face of Sarah took a peculiar meaning.

"Ah! miss," she said, "they tell you everything, I see."

"No, they don't!" cried Miss Bertram, alarmed, "and I know nothing, nurse—nothing, indeed." Here she paused, and became very red; for, if Lily Bertram had faults, to tell deliberate untruths was not one of them, and this asseveration that she knew nothing died on her lips, and left her in a state of miserable confusion.

Sarah was far too clever and too shrewd to force the enemy's retrenchments.

"Well, well, those who want Miss Scot must find her," was all she said; and, having found what she wanted and had come for, she went back to the house, wondering jealously why Miss Bertram was admitted to a confidence from which she was excluded.

But where is the use of a secret in such matters, and especially in a place like Saint Aubin? Of course, Miss Scot told her mother, who said at once:

"I am so glad, my dear child; but we must keep it very quiet."

"Yes, mamma dear," answered Lily, very sweetly, "and I think we must not tell Mrs. Petherick."

"Mrs. Petherick!" almost screamed Mrs. Scot; "I wonder you could think of such a thing! Do you want it to be over all Saint Aubin before night? Mrs. Petherick, indeed!"

Luckily for Lily Scot's secret, Mrs. Petherick did not come in that day, and put Mrs. Scot's constancy to the proof. But what possessed Captain Jekyll to drop in that afternoon? —by what unfortunate chance did he find Mrs. Scot alone? —and owing to what perverse spirit was it that he spoke so tenderly of the fair Lily Scot, lamenting with some pathos that she should waste so long "her sweetness on the desert air?"

"Now, that is good," said Mrs. Scot, with a laugh and a sniff of indignation. "I wonder that you, Captain Jekyll—but then," she added, correcting herself, and looking at him with mild pity, "how should you know?"

The captain laid his finger to his nose, and rolled his goggle-eyes.

"Ah! ah!" he chuckled—"all under the rose. I see—I understand—very good; only don't tell Mrs. Petherick, unless you wish to have it pretty widely known."

Mrs. Scot protested she did not understand Captain Jekyll's meaning, and Captain Jekyll, protesting that it was capital—on his word it was—took his leave, and, rushing off from house to house, told every one that Lily Scot was engaged to "that young Graham, you know, but that it was not to get into the Petherick Gazette, you know." Thanks to which kind recommendation, Mrs. Petherick had learned the news from five different persons before she sat down to take her tea that evening. But of this outward result Mrs. Scot and her family were blissfully ignorant, and remained innocently persuaded that Saint Aubin knew nothing about their concerns.

Mrs. Graham was much affected when she learned her nephew's double victory.

"My dear boy," she said, "I do not know which I like best—that you should build that turret, or marry Lily, who is the dearest girl. I only wish Mr. Bertram had made up his mind earlier, and then I should have enjoyed the treat."

The only miserable person was Lily Bertram; she felt

overwhelmed with confusion and remorse at her involuntary treason, little suspecting that Miss Scot's trousseau, and the day of her wedding, were already openly discussed in every English family domiciled in Saint Aubin.

"How shall I look in her face?" thought Miss Bertram, who had suddenly fled home to her own room, and yet the fascination of danger took her back the same evening to Mrs. Scot's house. She found the family gathered in the usual sitting-room, and Mr. Graham with them. Mrs. Graham looked bright as the day in her chair, and Mrs. Scot lazily content on her sofa. There was not much in that; the change was in Miss Scot. Instead of sitting between her two little sisters, superintending their work, and busily stitching herself, Miss Scot, though presiding as usual at her own little table, was alone there with Mr. Graham; both were bending forward. Mr. Graham seemed to be drawing something, and Miss Scot to be looking at his work. Neither moved on the entrance of Miss Bertram, who, indeed, was accustomed to run in and out of Mrs. Scot's house as free and as unheeded as a kitten. She went and sat by Jane and Louisa, who were unusually prim and self-possessed, and declined to talk about the treat. Mr. Graham and Miss Scot were conversing in a soft under-key, and fragments of their discourse reached Miss Bertram's attentive ear.

"So those are the windows," said Miss Scot. "I like them—they are very pretty."

She looked down at his drawing with soft, serious eyes, and he looked with involuntary tenderness in her face. She was his, and of all possessions dear to a young man's heart there is surely none so dear as that of his first love.

"Windows! what windows?" whispered Miss Bertram to Jane.

"Hush!" replied that young lady, rather austerely, and with an evident imitation of Lily Scot's manner.

Louisa was much amused at Miss Bertram's stare of surprise, and leaned back in her chair in a fit of suppressed laughter. Jane condescended to smile, but the smile, too, was a Lily-Scot smile—sweet, serious, and reticent. Miss Bertram reddened up to the roots of her hair.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, a little indignantly. "I said, 'What windows?' There is nothing ridiculous in that, is there?"

"My dear," softly said Miss Scot, looking up; and Miss Bertram at once calmed down, and, blushing with some little confusion at her warmth of temper, bent over the roses of her worsted work.

"No one means any harm," said Jane, still gently grave and amiable; "but, of course, you do not understand."

"But I do understand," said Miss Bertram, in her vexation; "only I thought it was such a secret!"

"What's a secret?" asked Mrs. Graham, with her brightest smile.

No one answered, but after that what secret could there be?

CHAPTER XIV.

This was how Mr. Graham became a permanent resident in the old Norman inn, above the entrance gate of which the two travelers were ever going on toward Jerusalem—one faint and weary, the other full of strong hope and fervent desire. He took Mrs. Graham back to London, settled some matters there, then returned alone to Saint Aubin, to carry on his double fortunes—to make love to Lily Scot, and to build Mr. Bertram's turret. He felt very happy. His first love and his first venture combined to make life fair in his eyes; and then everything went on so smoothly. Lily was perfection, of course, and the turret promised to be a success in every sense of the word.

Mr. Bertram had agreed to give thirty thousand francs, Mr. Lennard had promised twenty thousand for his ward, and Jean Merle had bound himself to build the turret under Mr. Graham's directions for forty thousand. Ten thousand francs, four hundred pounds sterling, remained to the young man—four hundred pounds and the honor of the thing! To a great, successful architect this would have been nothing; to Edward Graham it was, if not a fortune, at least the promise of one.

Everything, as we said, went on smoothly, but Edward Graham worked as hard as if his path were beset with obstacles. According to the terms of their agreement, Mon-

sieur Merle, the builder, was responsible for all, but, according to the same agreement, the young architect was to have a perpetual right of interference.

"Monsieur might have trusted me," said Jean Merle, his honest blue eyes kindling with wounded pride; "but I am not afraid of being found fault with," he added, with a little defiant laugh.

"You must not mind it, Monsieur Merle," said the young man, soothingly; "this is my first great task; I must see to everything. I will have no personal dealings with either Maître Jacques Cœur, or Maître Louis Renaud, or, unless when I cannot help it, with your men, but still I must see to everything."

But Monsieur Merle persisted in saying that he might have been trusted, and that he had no fear, and, though somewhat affronted at first, he recovered his equanimity after a time, and got on beautifully with his young employer. Edward Graham worked hard, as we said, but he had a frame of iron—he could bear it; never, indeed, had he felt in more vigorous health or in mood more buoyant. He rose with dawn and went to bed at midnight; he took nothing on trust, neither stone, nor wood, nor work; for Mr. Graham was no experienced successful architect, who could leave all to subordinates, and reap the reward of their toil. He felt anxious and responsible, and, when carpenter, builder, and mason rested, he still labored on. His soul was in his task, and he had set his heart, not merely on success and fame, but on work well done. If the Romans were cruel, stern, and unpoetic—if they ravaged lands, and subdued nations without ruth, and never paused or relented in their work of death—if they plundered and enslaved races more gifted than their own, and poured forth the blood of captives, or rejoiced in their tortures in more than a thousand arenas, yet one praise their most bitter foes cannot deny them—their work was always great work, and, when they built, they built for eternity. And the gift still clings to their blood. Though the Romans have little left to build—though they have palaces, churches, and basilicas enough for the world—they have not lost the skill of their ancestors, and they are still first in the art of hewing stones and raising great and solid stone-work.

Something of that hereditary excellence and tendency Mr. Graham had. He loved good work, and he knew how

to secure it. Solidity, truth, and honesty characterized this his first great undertaking. He spared no pains of his own to accomplish his purpose; his days were devoted to it, his thoughts, waking and sleeping, were in it; he lived, thought, studied, and read for that; and only in the evening, when he went in to Mrs. Scot's, did he allow himself an hour's repose. But then it was a delicious hour. To sit and look at Lily, so neat, so dainty, and so fair, was in itself a delightful reward. To look up at fruit ripening on another man's tree is poor comfort to the thirsty wayfarer, but to see that fair fruit, and to know that the day is coming when you can stretch out your hand and pluck it, is quite another thing. Lily Scot was Mr. Graham's reward; she was the prize of victory, the fair and tender recompense of all his toil. He could not watch her charming ways, her gentle and serious grace—he could not meet her soft, dark eyes, and not feel with tender complacency, "All this is, or will be, mine." They were to be married when the turret was completed. Mr. Graham had gone over his calculations again and again, and he had felt authorized to begin a new life, with Lily Scot for his partner. He would not have much money, but the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold was a classical house. There was not an architect of note in France, scarcely in Europe, who had not heard of it. With that house the name of Edward Graham was now linked, and he felt confident that it would prove the stepping-stone to fame, and to lucrative work too. He knew that his labors were watched, praised, and criticised in more than one great city. He had the doubtful satisfaction of reading a sharp comment on his undertaking in an English periodical well known to men of his profession. "Why did Mr. Graham do this, and why did not Mr. Graham do that?" was the substance of the article. "But, after all, it brings a man before the public, you know," said Mr. Edward Graham to Lily Scot, who was gently indignant with the anonymous censor. "It was so ill-natured," said this little innocent. As if good or ill nature had anything to do with favorable or adverse criticism! "It brings a man before the public," persisted Edward Graham, who was not over-sensitive, and who also knew the value of being remembered *quand même*. Praise would have been better than blame, but blame was better than silence, and praise he had from men who had a right to give it. He knew that Sir

Edmund Shrievewell, that great architect, on whose table he had first seen De Renneville's book, had stepped out of his way to give a look at him and his labors in Saint Aubin. Sir Edmund Shrievewell had been very kind, indeed—a little condescending, but still very kind. He had praised and criticised, and given a suggestion here and there, and then gone his way, and, before going, informed Mr. Bertram that his architect was a young man of spirit and promise, with plenty of the right sort of stuff in him. Little Miss Bertram had heard this, as she heard everything, and rushed off in hot haste to tell Lily Scot, who, beaming with modest pride, had told her mother, who had told all Saint Aubin that Sir Edmund Shrievewell had remained "positively astounded on seeing Mr. Graham's work, and declared with a round oath —it is very shocking of Sir Edmund to swear, but men will swear, my dear Mrs. Petherick—that he could not have done it better."

"Traduttore, traditore," says the Italian proverb, a saying which seems to hold good with speeches repeated as well as with books translated. Mrs. Scot's version was received as gospel truth in Saint Aubin, where Mr. Graham became a lion, after a fashion. Many people thought him cold, disagreeable, and haughty, but the English colony was proud of him, and the natives admired him prodigiously, on the word of all who had dealings with him. Maître Jacques Cœur and Maître Louis Renaud did not know which to praise him for most, his talent or his sharpness; and Monsieur Jean Merle said that, of all honorable, just men that he had dealt with, none surpassed Mr. Graham. Messieurs Duhamel and Gentil agreed for once to declare that time would show; but who cared for their verdict? "All jealousy, my dear!" as Mrs. Scot said.

If the young man would have gone into Saint Aubin society, he could have done so, for it was ready to receive him with open arms; but he had no leisure for its embraces. He spent some of his time at Mrs. Scot's, as a matter of course, and he was welcomed and hospitably entertained; but only now and then, in a formal way, at Mr. Bertram's; and he also called occasionally on Mr. Lennard; but this was all, for, as we said, Mr. Graham had really no time to spare. The winter had been so fine that the weather had given him no leisure, and now, winter being nearly over, and spring at hand,

he could look forward to the completion of his task for the end of summer; by that time, too, he could be spending his honeymoon on the lakes, and bringing home the fair Lily, Lily Scot no longer, to a home of her own. All this was very pleasant, and, though Edward Graham took it perhaps too much as a matter of course that his path should be smooth, and that matters should go on well with him, he was also conscious that his lines had been cast in pleasant places, and he enjoyed the present time as a young man of twenty-five may enjoy his first success and his first love. Perhaps he was not sufficiently on his guard against the possibility of unpleasantness. When it came he received it equably enough in appearance, but in reality he felt as disagreeably surprised as though a check had ever been out of the question.

As a matter of courtesy and policy, Edward Graham called every now and then on Mr. Lennard, and reported to him the progress of his task. To be sure, Mr. Lennard, who came and looked at the building several times a week, knew all about it, but Mr. Graham had tact enough to feel that he must not rely upon these flying visits, and that Mr. Lennard, without whose consent he could have done nothing, could not be treated with politeness too scrupulous or too exact.

One fine morning in March, when he happened to have really nothing to do, Edward Graham accordingly called on Miss Bertram's *tuteur*. His house in the Haute-ville was next Mr. Bertram's. It was an old house, with an arched gateway, a broad court, and a straight, formal garden behind. In that garden Edward Graham found Mr. Lennard, standing still in the sun, and staring straight before him, with his hands in his pockets.

"Good-morning, Mr. Graham," he said, rather formally; "glad to see you." And he gave him a finger.

Edward Graham was quick to feel the coolness of his reception. At once his keen eyes were on Mr. Lennard's face, reading it shrewdly; but that cool, dry, worldly face rarely told its meaning, and the young man was baffled.

"It cannot be anything about my work or me," he thought, anxiously.

"And how are we getting on, Mr. Graham?" asked Mr. Lennard, nodding in the direction of Mr. Bertram's house. "All right there, I suppose?"

"I hope so," was the quiet answer.

"Don't hope—be sure. By-the-by, I looked in yesterday, as they told you."

But no one had told Mr. Graham, and he said so.

"Not worth while," dryly said Mr. Lennard. "Well, I am glad you looked in—I had something to say, Mr. Graham—about that staircase, you know."

"The staircase is all right, I hope," said Mr. Graham.

"Oh! you mean your staircase—I mean the old one—not found it out yet, eh?"

And Mr. Lennard winked at him with his little, keen, gray eye, and looked shrewd and, Edward Graham thought, rather vicious. Slowly and cautiously he asked what old staircase Mr. Lennard meant. Mr. Lennard laughed, shut his eyes, and laughed again.

"Now that's a joke!" he said, at length; "an architect, and not to find out that there was a staircase once on a time between the main building and the turret that is gone. I do call that a joke, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham reddened, but he kept his temper, and so composedly asked for an explanation that Mr. Lennard, notwithstanding his exquisite sense of that joke, gave it at length. There had been a staircase leading from the house to the turret—it was gone, but traces of it must exist, and Mr. Lennard suggested that Mr. Graham should search for them, and having found them adapt his staircase "to the original thing—much the best plan, you may be sure," added Mr. Lennard, with a knowing wink.

This advice, which might have been good or bad, or simply indifferent in the beginning, was so preposterous at this eleventh hour that Mr. Graham required all his self-command not to treat it with contempt, but he answered, quietly enough:

"There was a staircase, of course. I have found no traces of it, and now it is too late to take it into account."

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Lennard, raising his eyebrows.

"I really do," said Edward Graham, trying to laugh, "for I have managed my staircase without it, Mr. Lennard."

"Then, depend upon it, you are all wrong," said Mr. Lennard, confidentially.

Mr. Graham bit his lip.

"Perhaps you would not mind looking out for that old staircase, just to see," amiably continued Mr. Lennard. "I should like it, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham bowed rather stiffly, and spoke of other things, and Mr. Lennard dropped the staircase, and was pleasant enough after a fashion, but the young man left him with a thorn of vexation at his heart. What did Mr. Lennard mean by that staircase? What could he mean by anything so absurd? The man was crotchety, but no fool. What could he mean? To annoy him! Why so? Mr. Graham had always treated Mr. Lennard with deference, and listened to his suggestions with attention and courtesy. Why should he all at once have become so perverse, not to say foolish?

And yet, foolish and perverse though that man was, he must be minded; much lay with him, and he could be troublesome if he chose. This is one of the vexations of life, that the narrow, the silly, and the mean among the lookers-on so often have power to wear out the hearts of the earnest and the brave among the doers, of the men and women who, whatever their sphere and their task may be, only ask to do their work, and to be allowed to do it well.

Instead of the half-holiday with Lily Scot's society, of course, in which Mr. Graham had meant to indulge, he now took a stroll up the street, fretting over the vexatious interference.

"Oh! Mr. Graham, do come in," suddenly said a light young voice, which Mr. Graham knew but too well. It was impossible to feign deafness; and, though unwillingly enough, he paused. Lily Bertram's rosy face was peeping out at him from the ground-floor window of the *asile*, and her little brown hand was beckoning him within. "I want you to see the house and the old people and Sister Martha," said Lily, with some gravity; "you have time to-day, you know, so do come in, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham had a great mind to resist, but, on second thoughts, it seemed wiser to yield. The door stood open; he crossed the threshold; in a moment Lily was by his side.

"This way," she said, breathlessly. She led him down the broad path to the little green garden, where the old men were sitting on the sunlit benches. The scene scarcely seemed to have changed since the last autumn, when Edward

Graham had caught a glimpse of it in passing by. Some old men had dropped away, but others had come in to fill their vacant places, and the only essential difference was that of which Lily at once made him aware—"Poor Sister Martha no longer goes out collecting," she said; "and so I must bring her what I give her; and yet she says she is *so* happy."

The sister, who was standing by, turned her fresh, happy face, and said, good-humoredly:

"Why, of course, I am happy, mademoiselle. Have I not the good God and the old people? What more can a little sister want?"

"But *I* should be miserable," cried Lily, "for the old people must be cross sometimes."

Sister Martha laughed.

"They are very good," said she; "but how could you be happy in our life, since you are not meant for it? You do not suppose that we do anything wonderful?" she added, raising her eyebrows in amused surprise at the suggestion—"not a bit. We do it because we are meant to do it. It gives us no trouble, and costs us so little that we are quite amazed at the fuss some people make with us. Why, we would not change lots with the empress!" cried Sister Martha, with a merry laugh.

"Ah! but it must be so dull to be always doing the same thing," added Lily, whose face grew long at the thought.

"Kings and queens are always doing the same thing," shrewdly answered Sister Martha, "and they like it. Soldiers and sailors, and men in business, and lawyers, and doctors, and fine ladies and gentlemen, are always doing the same thing, and every one of them likes it."

"Well," remarked Lily, looking impressed, "I dare say you are right, Sister Martha; birds are always hopping, or flying, or singing; and the wind is always whistling, and blowing, and going about; and the sun is always rising and setting, and I suppose they all like it."

"Of course they do," said Sister Martha, composedly, "and that because they are all doing what they are meant to do."

"That woman is a philosopher," thought Edward Graham, who had been listening to her attentively; and when she turned to him, and civilly asked if he wished to see the

house, he assented, not so much to look at a few old men and women as to draw Sister Martha out a little more. But the little sister's philosophy was more practical than spoken. She rarely put it into words, no doubt thinking that to do, not to talk, was what she was meant for. When Edward Graham gently hinted at all she and the other little sisters had to bear, she only laughed gayly, and replied:

"But every one has got something to bear, monsieur, and we really have not more than other people."

This was all the wisdom the young man could extract from her, yet when he parted from Sister Martha, and left her during an opportune moment, when Lily Bertram was deeply engaged in talking to an old man, he felt all the better for this glimpse of a life so self-denying, so austere, and yet so cheerful.

"Can I not do what a simple peasant-girl does?" he argued to himself. "Can I not go through what I am meant to do, and bear with its vexations? Indeed, with God's help, I will!"

In this mood he went at once to Mr. Bertram's house to inquire about the missing staircase there. He met Mr. Bertram in the court on the point of going out.

"Good-morning, Mr. Graham," he said, graciously. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you to-day, and of telling you how well I think everything is going on—admirably, I may say. I hope you are satisfied."

Mr. Graham looked at his work. The workmen had gone to take their noonday meal, and the unfinished turret rose, its scaffolding around it, on a background of blue air. It was white and silent, and unadorned as yet by the Gothic carving which was to make it match with the rest of the building; but it was very fair in Mr. Graham's eyes, and it was honestly that he answered:

"I have no reason to complain, Mr. Bertram, but Mr. Lennard wishes me to look for traces of the staircase which existed in the turret we are rebuilding. I suppose they can be found in the house."

Mr. Bertram raised his handsome eyebrows in supercilious surprise.

"Absurd!" he murmured, with a smile of mild contempt —"quite absurd. I know of no such traces, and cannot imagine what we want with them. Mr. Lennard is a worthy

man; I have great regard for him, but he is getting too absurd, you know."

"Then it is useless for me to look," said Edward Graham, rather gravely.

"Oh! you may look, Mr. Graham," replied Mr. Bertram, with amiable condescension. "I remember now to have heard about something of the kind long ago, but I can give you no assistance. Good-morning, Mr. Graham. I am really sorry Mr. Lennard should be so absurd, but you may look."

And, with a graceful wave of his hand, and a flash of the diamond ring, Mr. Bertram was gone.

Thus authorized, Mr. Graham entered the house and began his search. The drawing-room, the rooms next it, were examined in vain. At length Mr. Graham came to the door of a closet, which he opened with impatient haste. It was quite dark, but a lighted candle was soon got, and showed him that it was filled with lumber. Files of newspapers lay piled on shelves; furniture broken or disused filled one corner; dingy pictures in tarnished frames stood with their faces to the wall. All these cast-off worldly goods Mr. Graham moved, and put back with his own hands—in vain, he found no token of the staircase. Cobwebs in his hair, and, for all he knew, spiders, and dust on his hands, were the only reward of his pains.

"Vexatious!" he thought, putting back the last picture in its place against the wall, and turning away. But, as the light from the candle in his hand flashed across the face of the portrait, for it was one, he turned back hastily, gave the whole picture a rapid look, then stood spellbound, gazing at a beautiful woman in all the prime of her beauty and the bloom of her youth, who looked back at him with proud, laughing, dark eyes. She wore over her bright, brown hair an old-fashioned but becoming cap of dainty lace, with a little rakish tricolor set in it on one side. Long, gold ear-rings, such as Norman fisherwomen still wear, fell down to her neck; a narrow black-velvet ribbon clasped her white throat, a gold heart and cross pendent from it rested on her breast of snow. Through a lace *fichu* folded across her bosom, and fastened at the waist by a broad tricolor sash, gleamed her round, white shoulders—shoulders so perfect in form and color that Edward Graham had never seen any like them; and

everything in her, from her lustrous eyes to her rosy lips, seemed to say, "Look at me, for I am beautiful!" And Mr. Graham did look, intoxicated, ravished.

Who shall deny thy power, immortal beauty, when we see thee thus rule men's hearts from beyond the grave? The painting was a fine one—there was light in those eyes, those lips breathed, and that warm flesh was living; but would Mr. Graham have looked at this picture so long, keen though his love and appreciation of fine paintings were, if the image it showed him had not been so lovely?

Oh! rich brown hair curling round an ivory brow, eyes of dark lustre shining from beneath fine-penciled eyebrows, exquisite lips and dainty dimpled chin, cheeks like the rose, and matchless neck and shoulders, how could this young man look at you and not forget for a moment that you had long been dust? But he remembered it at length, and with the remembrance came the wish of knowing what painter had wrought an image so rare. He stopped to read the name at the bottom of the picture.

"It's by David," said Miss Bertram's clear, young voice behind him.

Mr. Graham turned round, rather annoyed, to find that Miss Bertram had, as usual, discovered his whereabouts. She continued, eager and willing, to inform him, as was her wont:

"Perhaps you have not heard of David, Mr. Graham?"

"I have heard of a David who was an author," replied Mr. Graham, amused, in spite of himself; "he wrote a book of psalms, I believe. He was also a king, and had a harp—at least, I have been told so."

Lily reddened. She saw that Mr. Graham was "making fun of her," to use her own words. She also had a strong suspicion that he might not need the information she was anxious to give, but that insatiable love of talking which was her great infirmity would not let her be silent.

"The David I mean," said she, "was a great French painter. He was such a monster; he voted the death of Louis XVI., was the friend of Robespierre and Marat," added Lily, with a shudder, "but he was a great painter."

"Yes, he voted the death of Louis XVI., and painted the coronation of Napoleon," said Mr. Graham, with quiet scorn. "I have heard of the man, but he was a fine painter too,

though scarcely the one for this lovely creature to sit to. May I ask who she was, Miss Lily?"

"Don't you know?" exclaimed Lily, nettled to find that she never could tell Mr. Graham something he did not know already. "I thought you knew everything, Mr. Graham."

"I deplore to say it—there are blanks in my knowledge, though, as you have already discovered, it is of the most extensive kind—indeed quite overpowers me at times—and one of these blanks is my ignorance of this lovely lady's name."

"She was my French great-grandmother," answered Lily, pacified. "David painted her portrait, and wanted to marry her as well; but she was a fisherman's daughter, and became a fisherman's wife. Poor great-grandmamma! it was no fault of hers if she was not a Bertram, was it, Mr. Graham? But papa will keep her in here, and will not hang her up, all on account of that tricolor cockade and sash; for it seems she was very, very republican. They called her *la belle patriote*, and she was beautiful, was she not? Papa says that her face is too round, that her mouth is too large, and her nose too short; but oh! I do think her so lovely, Mr. Graham. And you must not think that, because she was a republican, and wore tricolor sashes and cockades, she was like David, and would have voted the death of Louis XVI. I am sure she would not," added Lily, warmly.

All that Mr. Graham gathered from this account of *la belle patriote* was, that Mr. Bertram was ashamed of his late wife's plebeian ancestress, and that he therefore quarreled with her beauty as well as with that wicked little cockade in her cap. But a second look at the portrait, before which he still stood, with the light in his hand, showed him that the fastidious English gentleman's criticisms were correct in the main. That enchanting face, so fresh, so bright, so fair, was not faultless, after all, and Mr. Graham was surprised not to have discovered this sooner—surprised to find that those dark eyes and that lovely bloom had so far dazzled his correct and critical eye.

"And had this lady no story?" asked Mr. Graham, after a pause.

"Every one has got a story," gravely replied Lily, "and she had hers. Her young husband was lost at sea; his boat was run into on a dark night by a trading vessel, and he was drowned with his two brothers, and no one ever knew anything

about it till the captain of the trading vessel was on his death-bed—for he had sworn his men not to tell—but his conscience pricked him then, and he sent five hundred francs to each of the three widows; and what do you think my great-grandmother said, and she was very poor, Mr. Graham? 'Keep your money,' she said. 'J'veux m'n homme'—'I want my man,'" added Lily, translating the words for Mr. Graham's benefit, "for you know no woman in that class ever says 'my husband.'"

Mr. Graham always shunned Lily's society. She was a child, a great talker, and, however he managed, she made him lose time; but Mr. Bertram's daughter, who was also the little mistress of the house he was rebuilding, could not be avoided too openly, and had to be endured occasionally. Besides, though Mr. Graham did not want Lily, he had a sort of liking for her. She was a warm-hearted little thing; she adored Lily Scot, and she was clever and amusing enough now and then. So he now heard her out patiently, smiled at her little story of her ancestress, and ended by putting a question concerning the staircase.

"A staircase!" echoed Lily, looking wise; "why, Mr. Graham, how can there be a staircase when the turret is gone?"

"Mr. Lennard says there are traces of one, Miss Bertram."

To his surprise, Lily colored up, and looked almost ready to cry.

"Mr. Lennard is getting very tiresome," she said; "he worries poor papa to death about that hedge, and now he wants to worry you about my turret."

Mr. Graham felt unpleasantly surprised at this intimation of a disagreement between Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard. Might it not end by affecting him and his work in the end? Was this sudden and perverse suggestion of the defunct staircase the penalty which he must pay for the difference of the two friends?

"Poor godpapa!" resumed Lily, calming down; "he cannot help it. He has the gout, you know; and papa says we must not mind."

She looked up with her clear, brown eyes, so frank and true, in Mr. Graham's face, to find some comfort there; but he only smiled gravely, and, locking the closet door, left the room, followed by Lily.

"Oh! Mr. Graham," she said, as they entered the drawing-room together, and forgetting all her trouble in a moment, "I have been reading such a funny story this morning."

"Have you, Miss Bertram?" he replied, feeling the coming peril, but not knowing how to shun it.

"Yes; shall I tell it to you?" said Lily, with her usual liberality, and her eyes sparkling at the delightful prospect of hearing her own voice a little longer.

But Mr. Graham, ungrateful man, hastened to reply, as he moved toward the stairs:

"Thank you, Miss Lily; I am sure it is a delightful story, but unluckily I have no time to hear it now."

He opened the door as he spoke.

"It is a very short story," cried Lily, following her victim, and naturally anxious to prevent him from escaping; "it would not take me five minutes to tell."

But Mr. Graham was already down-stairs, crossing the court at a pace which made pursuit hopeless. Lily looked blankly after him, but, though annoyed at having to keep in her story, she forgot him before he was fairly out of sight. Oh! fickle Lily, for the sake of a white pigeon who came and alighted on the open window! Breathless with delight and with admiration, Lily stood still, watching her visitor as he strutted along the stone ledge cooing at her—so at least Lily thought. But this bird, like other birds of his feather, seemingly meant nothing by his cooing, for, when Lily ventured to draw a step nearer to him, he opened his white wings and flew away.

"How ungrateful!" indignantly thought Lily, looking out of the window after him, and, as she did so, oh, joy of joys! there was Mr. Graham, imprudent man, who stood in the court below in the sunshine.

"I dare say I can go down and tell him the story now," thought Lily.

She was not without a dim consciousness that Mr. Graham might not care to hear the story; but, like all talkers, she overlooked this trifling consideration in the gratification of her ruling passion, so, before Mr. Graham could even think of escape, Lily, eternal Lily, was once more at his elbow.

"I think," said Lily, point-blank, "that I had better tell

you the story now, Mr. Graham—I mean I had better not wait till this evening."

Mr. Graham groaned in the spirit, and gloomy resignation appeared in his face, but he submitted.

"Tell away," he answered. "I think you said it was a funny story."

"Oh! so funny," cried Lily, chuckling at the remembrance.

"Then it is wasted upon me. Neither at comic songs nor at funny stories do I ever laugh."

"But you must laugh at this," insisted Lily. "It is about Gibbon. You have heard about him, of course. Papa has got him in I don't know how many volumes. Well, you must know that he was a little fat man, and yet, would you believe it, he actually fell in love with a very pretty Madame de Crouzas? She became Madame de Montolieu later, and wrote such a pretty story—'Caroline de Lichtfeld.' Papa has got that, too—would you like to read it?—shall I go and look for it for you?" cried Lily, her eyes sparkling at the thought of doing something that would please some one.

"Thanks—I have no time for novels," said Mr. Graham, arresting her with a gesture of his hand; "besides, I am dying to know what befalls the little fat Gibbon, who takes the egregious liberty of falling in love with that pretty Madame de Crouzas."

"Well, one day Gibbon calls on the lady. She was sitting so," said Lily, taking a garden chair that stood there, and leaning back in it in a graceful attitude to dramatize the story, "when all at once Gibbon throws himself on his knees at her feet, tells her he can't live without her, and all that. 'But you must, sir,' says the lady"—here Lily frowned with some severity. "'Get up at once, sir, or I shall get quite angry.' Gibbon does not stir. 'Get up, if you please, sir,'" resumed Lily, looking a picture of offended decorum. "'Madame, I can't,' says poor Gibbon. 'You can't, sir!—well, then, I must ring the bell, and have you picked up.'" And Lily stretched out her hand, rang an imaginary bell, and said to an imaginary servant, "'Pick up Monsieur Gibbon.' Now, is not that a story?" cried Lily, bursting into one of her loud, clear, pealing laughs.

"There never was such a little actress," thought Mr. Graham, grave as a judge; "a cool young lady, too, telling

love-stories to the first man she can lay hold of." And, anxious to mortify this indecorous young lady, he said, aloud, "I told you I should not laugh at your story, Miss Lily."

"That's because you were not in it," promptly replied Lily, resuming her gravity. "I had a mind to ask you to kneel down and do Gibbon, but I fancied you would not; and yet it would have been so much better," pathetically remarked Lily.

"Would it?" almost snorted Mr. Graham, in his amazement and indignation at his vision of himself kneeling at Lily's feet. "You forget that I am not short and fat, Miss Lily."

"But since it would have been all make-believe!" exclaimed Lily, opening her eyes to the fullest extent, in evident surprise at his stupidity.

"I suppose it is innocence," he thought, after a pause; but, whether Lily's forwardness were innocence or not, he felt the ungenerous desire of putting down her vanity as a story-teller.

"That story of yours is wretched stuff, Miss Lily," he said, taking the knife and cutting into the flesh with surgical want of mercy; "only fit for Joe Miller—indeed, rather too poor for him, in my opinion."

Dismay appeared in Lily's face; but she was a very acquiescent little soul in the main, for all she said was:

"Oh, dear! is it so bad as all that?—and I who meant to tell it to every one!"

"Don't, unless you want every one to laugh at you, Miss Lily."

Lily, who had risen from her chair, and stood before Mr. Graham dancing on the tips of her toes, as was her wont, looked thoroughly disconcerted for one minute; then, rallying and brightening up with delightful rapidity, she said, with a quick, eager look up into Mr. Graham's face:

"Oh! but I have got another story, so much better than that. It is stupid, as you say; I shall tell it to you at once, and then you can tell me whether it is good or not; but it is rather long. I shall sit down."

Mr. Graham hastily looked at his watch.

"My dear Miss Lily," he said, "I must run away at once. Good-morning."

"I shall go down the road with you," cried Lily, starting to her feet. "I can tell it as we walk along."

"I must run, Miss Lily," he said, hurrying out under the arched gateway.

"And I am so fond of running," cried Lily, in great glee; "you can't beat me at running, Mr. Graham."

"We shall see that," said Mr. Graham," exasperated by the persecution, and no more charmed at the prospect of running a race down the open road with Miss Lily than of being seen doing Gibbon in a kneeling attitude at her feet in the sunny courtyard, with all the windows looking on.

"Ah! but start fair," said Lily, remonstratively, as they reached the gateway. "My shoe is down—wait a minute."

She stooped, but her slip-shod habits proved Lily's undoing. While she was lifting up the heel of her shoe, Mr. Graham caught her up, put her within the gate, darted outside, and drew the gate after him all in a moment.

Lily felt too much exasperated to attempt to open the door and overtake him. Tears of passion rushed to her eyes, and she stamped in her rage.

"I shall never tell Mr. Graham a story again," she cried in her wrath—"never!"

Mr. Graham was too full of his own thoughts to care much for Miss Bertram's displeasure just then. He went straight to Mrs. Scot's house, in the hope of finding his Lily alone at that hour, which was that of her mother's nap. He was not disappointed. Lily was in the garden, busy with her flowers, over which she stooped so intent that she was not aware of his presence until he stood close to her. She then raised her flushed face with a pleased and surprised smile.

"How kind to leave your work!" she said, with happy, grateful eyes; "we did not expect you before this evening."

"I scarcely hoped for this little bit of liberty," he answered, forgetting his trouble as his look rested on her face. "I seldom see you by daylight, you know—except on Sundays."

"And this is Tuesday," she said, pleasantly. "Mr. Lennard would have it that it was Wednesday, but—"

On hearing Mr. Lennard's name, Edward Graham gave a start, and with a sudden look of care he straight told Lily all that had passed this morning.

"And now, my darling," he added, by way of conclusion, "do tell me if you can what it means."

Lily, who had heard him with downcast eyes and a troubled face, looked up, and said with a sigh:

"I do not know. They have had many little differences, which have blown off; so will this, I hope—but I do not know."

Mr. Graham heard her gravely; he read doubt in her looks and accents, but he knit his brows, and tried to cheer her by saying, a little defiantly:

"Well, we need not care for that, you know, my darling. My business has nothing to do with the differences of Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard."

"Oh, no!" she replied, smiling prettily; "how could it?" But in her heart she thought, "Who knows?"

And so they tried to cheat each other, and to make believe that the serpent had not entered their little Eden.

CHAPTER XV.

When Edward Graham called the next day on Mr. Lennard, and informed him that he had found no traces of the old staircase, that gentleman merely puckered up his thick, gray eyebrows, until his narrow, stubborn forehead became a network of wrinkles, and said, "Indeed!"

"No," quietly responded the young architect, looking unconcerned, but by no means so at heart, "I have found nothing."

"And perhaps there *is* nothing," argued Mr. Lennard, in a tone of remonstrance, and as if he were rather aggrieved than otherwise by Mr. Graham's unreasonable search for a staircase that had no existence. "If I were you," he added, in a low, confidential tone, laying his finger to his nose with a knowing look—"if I were you, Mr. Graham, I would let that staircase alone."

Mr. Graham, though taken by surprise, had the presence of mind not to betray it. He even looked thoughtful for a moment, then said, gravely: "Well, Mr. Lennard, I think you are right. I shall take no more trouble about it." And so, with the assumption that he, and not Mr. Lennard, had

originated it, the matter was dismissed. Some lurking uneasiness still remained in the young man's mind. Caprice always has a dangerous aspect; but the feeling gradually died away, and appeared to be fairly buried when Mr. Lennard gave a bachelor-dinner, to which his friend's architect was invited. The dinner was a very pleasant one. It was excellent as a dinner. Mr. Lennard's old French *bonne* was a first-rate cook, and his wines were perfect. His guests, though few, were admirably matched. They had almost all dined with each other for many years, and knew their respective good and weak points to a T. They played into each other's hands without effort, knew what to say and what topics to shun; and Mr. Graham was pleased to find that Mr. Lennard's worship for his nobly-descended friend was as fervent as ever. Indeed, Mr. Bertram was quite unaffectedly and easily the great man of the little feast. He uttered his studiously-polished phrases with the courteous attention to his own phraseology which may be expected from a high-bred gentleman of the old school. He looked calmly and amiably down on his fellow-guests, with those fine blue eyes of his, and received their homage with the serene condescension of a superior being. Edward Graham saw, indeed, that the excessive worship, to use a mild word, of Captain Jekyll, brought a fastidious meaning to Mr. Bertram's patrician face; but it passed away, and the captain went on talking in a roar, and rolling his goggle-eyes in fulsome admiration until he brought matters to a crisis with old-fashioned courtesy. Mr. Lennard raised his glass, and drank the health of "The Bertram Lily" in choice Montebello. Mr. Bertram gracefully acknowledged the toast, and his white hand seemed whiter than ever, and the flash of his diamond ring quivered with something like emotion in its brilliancy, and all was going on charmingly, when Captain Jekyll thought fit to exclaim: "Ay, ay, you don't get such lilies on the Smith and Jones bushes—eh, sir?" and he winked knowingly, and roared at his own wit. Mr. Lennard, though he belonged to the Smith and Jones tribe, as everybody knew, seemed to enjoy the joke; but Mr. Bertram, mindful, perhaps, of his daughter's share of plebeian blood, looked cold and displeased, and later muttered within Edward Graham's hearing, "That man is odiously indelicate, sir." Mr. Lennard, however, to whom the remark was addressed, only rubbed his hands in evident glee,

and chuckled, and seemed infinitely amused. With this exception, the dinner went off charmingly.

"Nothing could be pleasanter," said Edward Graham to Lily Scot. "The two friends were quite cordial. It is all right."

But when is anything all right in this changing world? On the next day, as Mr. Graham stood looking at his turret —his far more than Mr. Bertram's—he suddenly knit his heavy Roman brows and bit his lip. Some very fine and elaborate stone carving was to adorn the windows of the turret. The task had been confided to a first-rate workman, and was now so far advanced that Mr. Graham could judge what the effect of the whole might be. A look told him that the effect was null. Those clearly-cut thistle-leaves, that vigorous northern foliage, which he had found flourishing on every roadside in the country, and which the old builders had transferred with such free and careless grace to the capitals of columns and the façades of houses in all Saint Aubin, which he had seized upon as being both beautiful and local, and tried to emulate with all the skill he called his—these ornaments, which were to distinguish his turret from any other plain turret, were a failure! That contrast of strong light and deep shadow, which he had wished for, had not been attained. The graceful foliage lay flat and lifeless on the stone wall.

"Charming!" murmured Mr. Bertram by his side. "That thistle is quite in character, Mr. Graham. The Greeks had their acanthus, but our northern thistle can compete with it. I am glad to see that you have noticed how it abounds in Saint Aubin sculpture."

But what is the ill-judged praise of the ignorant to the man conscious that his work is bad, and should be good? Moreover, the workman, who also stood by his side, and who read the meaning of his clouded face and compressed lips, said doubtfully:

"It will look sharper when there is more of it."

Mr. Graham turned upon the man. He was a Parisian, slender and wiry, with a little black mustache and a keen, clever, slightly sarcastic face. He wore a Turkish cap with a tassel to it, a gray blouse of fine holland, immaculate wristbands, and embroidered slippers. Mr. Graham did not like the man, but he could not do without him.

"You could not get another like him for twenty leagues

around Saint Aubin," Monsieur Jean Merle had said. "He got into trouble in Paris, and that is why we have him here; and then, though he is insolent, he is honorable. He keeps to an agreement, monsieur; and then he is a genius, is Laurent."

But geniuses are hard to please; and Monsieur Laurent's approbation of the young architect had always been very limited indeed.

"Ah! Gothic thistle," he had carelessly said; "I prefer Renaissance ornament—it is rounder and more harmonious. I like the cheerfulness of it. Renaissance is happy and airy; Gothic is melancholy."

This comment, uttered in Mr. Bertram's hearing, greatly displeased Mr. Graham. He resolved to keep Monsieur Laurent at a distance, and was therefore more annoyed than pleased at his consolatory assurance that "it would look sharper when there was more of it."

"It will look flatter," thought Edward Graham; "but is the blame his or mine?"

His brow flushed to think that the error might be his; and he bit his lip at the thought of being fettered with an incompetent instrument. Whichever was the case, he saw delay and pecuniary loss before him, not to speak of possible contention. "I must not tell Lily about this—it would distress her," was the only conclusion he came to as he left Mr. Bertram's house; and he would certainly have adhered to this resolve if he had not found himself alone with Lily Scot that evening. They met daily, but had little private intercourse. Lily had so much to do that she really could not spare many minutes for her lover. Mrs. Scot would not admit for a moment that she could be in the way; and, whether they were so or not, Jane and Louisa were firmly determined to see and hear as much as they could of what was going on. Mr. Graham had chafed at first, then he had submitted, wisely remembering that a time would come when he should have Lily all to himself. But on this evening Mrs. Scot was in her room with a headache, and Jane and Louisa had gone to see Miss Bertram's rabbits. Lily was in the garden, sauntering there in the cool spring evening, and alone.

"What a relief!" Edward Graham could not help saying.

"What is a relief?" asked Lily, demurely; but he could see her smile in the twilight.

"You know," he answered, smiling too.

She softly passed her hand through a bush of sweet-brier, and walked on, smiling still, and looking, thought her lover, very white and fair in that cool light; but even the contemplation of her gentle, refined face could not chase care away. His smile vanished, and the anxious look came back to his eyes, the cloud to his brow.

"Mr. Graham, what ails you?" asked Lily.

He hesitated, then he told her, but he made light of it.

"It is nothing, you know," said he, "nothing at all, only everything went on so well, that trifle worries me."

"Yes, of course," said Lily; "and I am sure it is nothing, as you say," she sweetly added—more sweetly than sincerely, for a terrible thought had crossed her mind and filled it with dismay. What if the mistake were greater and lay deeper than Mr. Graham confessed?—what if the turret were all wrong?—and what, above all, if Mr. Graham were not a genius? To doubt the man they love in anything is impossible to some women. They pass from the natural worship of the child for its parents to the adoration of the girl for her lover. But Lily Scot was not such a woman. She had never worshiped her mother in any way, never thought her perfect and infallible among women. She accepted Mr. Graham's love, and gave him her maiden affections in a quiet, independent spirit. He was a very nice man, and would make a very nice husband, and she thought him exceedingly clever; but, after all, when a check came, when on his own confession there was a mistake somewhere, she began to fear that she might have overrated his abilities. What did she know about architecture? How could she say that he was an Inigo Jones or a Christopher Wren redivivus? In short, the blind, fond, unreasoning trust was not hers. That might be why, though she spoke so sweetly, her kind, soothing words gave Mr. Graham little comfort. His pride was secretly stung. He put on a brave, cheerful air, and said, pointedly:

"You understand, my dearest Lily, that it is really nothing—"

"Oh! of course—" she hastened to remark.

"But this is my first great venture," he continued, "and so I may feel too anxious."

"I am sure you do," she cheerfully replied, slipping her arm within his, and looking up in his face with wistful tenderness.

Then she spoke to him about Jane and Louisa, who were getting on so nicely; then of some of her own little trials; then she indulged herself with a few glimpses of the future, modest yet happy, and in these glimpses her lover saw new tokens of the serene domestic nature which was her prevailing charm. But, though her gentle society suspended his trouble for a while, the annoyance returned all too swiftly and too surely when they parted.

He spent a sleepless night, and early the next morning he repaired to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Only a servant or two were about. The day was gray and lowering, and the new turret rose white and cold on a background of dull and sullen clouds. All the young architect's fears were confirmed. The ornament looked deplorably flat, tame, and poor, and, culminating misfortune, the fault was his! He stood looking thus in silent mortification, when Monsieur Jean Merle appeared, cheerful and breathless, for he was in a great hurry, having to go home at once.

"I see we are going on finely," said he to Edward Graham, rubbing his hands as he spoke. "Madame Merle is the sort of woman who never loses any time, and she has given me a sixth boy, you must know. I must go and have a look at the good lady. She is doing very well, and so is the turret—eh, Monsieur Graham? It will be a grand thing. They tell me the baby is twice the size of the last. How well that thistle looks—eh, Monsieur Laurent?"

Monsieur Laurent had just sauntered in. On being thus appealed to, he said, without enthusiasm, that the thistle looked well, but prudently added that it would look better on a sunny day.

"Of course, it will!" cried Monsieur Merle, still happy and exuberant. "Good-morning, Monsieur Graham—good-morning, Monsieur Laurent."

The workmen now came in, whistling cheerfully. They set to their tasks, laughing and shouting. How Mr. Graham envied their careless mood! "I wonder, after all, who is the happier man," thought he, watching one careless fellow who stood whistling on a frail plank, reckless of the gap at his feet—"he who trusts to his brain and men's esteem for

the reward of his toil, or he who relies on the strength and skill of his right hand, and whose sure eye and steady foot alone save him from a frightful death? Who can solve the vexed question?"

Here these philosophic speculations came to an abrupt end, for Mr. Cowper suddenly entered the court and stood before Edward Graham, fair, courteous, and smiling. Mr. Cowper had vanished so suddenly from Saint Aubin on the news of Edward Graham's and Lily Scot's engagement, that it was impossible for Miss Scot's favored lover not to conclude that the man whom he disliked had secretly been his rival. Involuntarily he had triumphed in his absence, and his unexpected return now stung him as a sort of insult. What ill wind had brought him? Nothing, however, could be more conciliatory than Mr. Cowper's address.

"My dear Graham," said he, with open look and extended hand, "how are you?—deep in the turret? On my word it is a fine thing. I congratulate you, I do; though, by-the-by, are those large leaves—thistles, I suppose—are they quite the thing?"

"They will be, I hope," sharply answered Mr. Graham.

"Of course—of course," soothingly said Mr. Cowper. "I suppose I shall find Mr. Bertram within?" And with a graceful wave of his gloved hand he entered the house.

"Even he can see it," thought Edward Graham, as he walked home to the Cité de Jérusalem. "A child can see it; only where is the remedy?" He sat long in his room, brooding over this mishap, and vexing himself till he could bear no more. He then took his hat and walked out. He was resolved to try if air and fatigue would not make him look at things more calmly. And if they could carry off his annoyance, so that no trace of it should be left for Lily's soft, dark eyes in the evening, why, so much the better.

He took the direction of Saint Aubin *sur dun*, and was soon out in the open country, beyond even the village and its pleasant homesteads. A low, sullen sky bent over the plain; a road wound through this till it vanished like a thread in the misty horizon. There had been heavy rains for the last week, and the earth looked sodden. Here and there a broad pool gave back the pale clouds which hung over them as if no breath of wind could ever make them move on. The day was a sad day, with nothing pleasant or hopeful in its mien,

and so Edward Graham felt it; yet the walk had done him good—his blood flowed freely in his veins, and he began to think that his difficulty, or his mistake, whichever it might be, was no great thing after all, when a raven flew past.

Do you believe in omens, reader? Have you too got, not your presentiment, that sort of whisper which every one seems destined to hear at some time or other, but that sign from the outward world which tells so plainly to some among us, and to some only, that trouble or sorrow is at hand? Edward Graham had his, an omen which once before in his life had spoken, an omen which he could not forget, for it was linked with his last recollection of a mother whom he had dearly loved.

They were out in the country on a gray day like this, he a lad walking by her side, when they came to an open quarry. A band of ravens was slowly wheeling above this. Some were going up, others were going down, all were croaking. Mrs. Graham gave her son a frightened look.

"Oh!" she said, shrinkingly, "ravens mean a long parting, Ned."

"And I am only going away for a few days," he answered, gayly.

He left the next morning for a few days, as he had said, but when he came back his mother was no more. He never forgot those words of hers—"a long parting;" nor that dull landscape, nor that leaden sky, nor the wheeling ravens going up and down the quarry; and when, long after this, in the course of his reading, he came upon an Arab poem, in which the raven is anathematized as the forerunner of sorrow and separation, he remembered it all more vividly still; and the latent superstition of his Italian blood, the heathen abhorrence of and belief in the fatal influence of that dark bird of prey on human destinies, awoke in him to sleep no more. Many a time he had turned back to avoid his enemy, and, though he was too wise, too reticent to boast of this strange superstition, he was too much in earnest to feel ashamed of it, even to himself. He accepted it with a sort of pagan fatalism. He neither doubted it nor speculated about it. It was so. The raven was a token of trouble to him—how or why he could not tell, but the raven was to be avoided by all means. But now, as the raven flew past in the gray sky, it was too late to shun him, and Edward Graham, being no coward,

thought rather defiantly, "Well, let the trouble come. I suppose I can bear it." And he stood and looked curiously at that black speck, following its steady flight with a sort of resentment, until it vanished. Then, and not till then, he turned back.

The wind had risen. It soon became strong and gusty, and swept over the desolate-looking land with a moan both loud and shrill. With this mingled the dull roaring of the sea; the mighty voice seemed to call him. The young man looked for a path that should lead him to the beach, and soon found one. It sank down between high banks, and led him on, the deep murmur growing louder and louder, till it brought him to what he was seeking. Perhaps the raven which had flown by, perhaps the events which were to follow, impressed it on his memory, but, whatever the cause might be, the picture which Edward Graham then saw he never forgot.

On either side of the rude and hollow path grew gigantic oaks. Their roots clung to barren rocks, their heads were reared in a stormy sky. Beneath the broad arch of their wide boughs the young man saw a misty horizon and a gray sea rushing sullenly up to the shore. It was as wild a landscape as he had ever beheld; and, to give it a more desolate meaning, an old woman sat on a low bank of earth, with a little fagot of sticks, which she had been gathering, by her side. Her hands were clasped around her knees, and her pale, wearied face looked out at him from beneath her black hood as she gazed moodily before her, a living image of that disappointment which waits for man at every turning of his fate. Edward Graham gave her a keen, searching look, then, saying to himself, "She is only a tired woman," he walked on to the beach.

The tide was coming in, and the sea was a fine one. The waves leaped up in their reckless mirth, which is so grand and terrible to see. No one save Edward Graham was there to look on their wild play. They rolled over one another, they strove who should first reach the beach, they broke there in a long line of foam, and then, with a hollow sound, they ran back to the great sea, swift, silent, and stealthy, to begin anew, and encroach more and more on the wet shingle, never reaching the foot of the low cliffs, and yet as eager in their race as though they meant to flow over them and flood the

land. There are no aspects of Nature so absorbing as those of the sea. The clouds and mists which gather around, the changing lights which pass athwart the mountains, have not the same endless variety as we find in the dim horizon, the cloudy or serene skies, the smooth or sullen waves of the ocean.

Edward Graham had been reared by the seaside, and the fascination upon him of that moving plain, of those heavy masses of water, of that incessant voice which night and day raises its loud murmur to Heaven, never wearied, though seemingly never heard, was deep and entire. He forgot his annoyance, he forgot even the raven as he walked along by those breaking waves, holding with them that secret converse which never ceases in the human heart, that silent speech with Nature which sleeps in cities and awakens again the moment we see her face. The wildness of the shore gradually faded, the cliffs grew lower and more broken, and fine lines of shipping began to appear, and flags to flutter on the cloudy sky; while a broken outline of roofs showed that Saint Aubin was nigh. By this the tide had turned, and a long, wet line remained where the waves had been. Their fury, too, had abated, and they now tumbled languidly over one another as they rolled back to their vast bed. Edward Graham was watching one curiously, and he stood still to mark its retreating course, when he became aware of two ladies walking toward him, and to his great surprise he recognized Miss Scot and Miss Bertram. Miss Bertram's quick brown eyes saw him first. "O Lily! there's Mr. Graham," she cried aloud, clasping her hands with that earnestness which she put into all she did when her mood happened to be a grave one. Miss Scot's eyes were bent on the earth. She raised them, and the moment Mr. Graham met their look, and saw the sad gravity of her sweet, young face, he felt that something had happened, and that the raven had not flown over his head in vain.

"My dear Lily," he said, going up to her, "what brings you here?—and what—what is it?"

He took her hand and looked down in her face with fond concern, regardless, and indeed forgetful, of Miss Bertram's presence. Miss Scot did not answer at once, and Miss Bertram exclaimed, eagerly:

"O Mr. Graham! it is so dreadful!"

But, though she raised herself on tiptoe to say so, Mr.

Graham did not even heed her, so anxious was he to read Lily Scot's troubled face.

"Mr. Graham," she said, at length, "I am afraid it is all over. Poor mamma is ruined! We have lost all, or nearly all, we had. Mamma does not know it yet. Mr. Cowper came last night and brought the news to Mr. Bertram, who has just been telling me, and I was so overcome that I came here with Lily—I cannot face mamma yet. Mr. Bertram is looking everywhere for Mrs. Petherick, who knows all about it, to caution her not to say a word to poor mamma, who has a weak heart, till he has broken the sad news, for she must be told all the same; and we are undone." She tried to speak steadily—in vain; her voice faltered as she uttered the dismal tidings.

Edward Graham heard her in mute consternation, then, with that incredulity which is the protest of indignant human nature against sorrow—so hard, so cruel does it seem—he poured forth useless questions. How was this? Was there no mistake? There must be a mistake somewhere. It could not be true. But it was true, and there was no mistake. The great city bank of Marshall & Sylvester had stopped payment, and was not expected to give sixpence in the pound. Mr. Bertram had lost two thousand pounds, and Mrs. Scot nearly all she had in the world.

"My poor darling," tenderly said Edward Graham, taking her two hands and clasping them in his, "this is indeed a blow; but we are young, and it shall not part us, and Mr. Cowper need not have brought the news," he added, with a flash in his dark eye.

"Mr. Graham, it must part us," sadly replied Lily. "You are not rich, and—and there are four of us," she added, with a heavy sigh.

The prospect of marrying Mrs. Scot, and Louisa, and Jane, as well as the gentle and charming girl before him, was appalling enough in all reason; but Mr. Graham knit his heavy brows, and compressed his lips, and clasped the two little hands of his betrothed all the more closely as he said:

"Nothing shall part us, Lily—nothing."

They both forgot Miss Bertram, who hastened to put in her word. "And you know, Lily, that Jane and Louisa are to come to us—you know they are," she added, ardently.

"Papa said so at once, and they must come," added Miss Bertram, her bright eyes dewy with tears.

"Dearest Lily," said Mr. Graham, making her walk on, and walking by her side, "trust in me—trust in me."

"I shall give them my room," said Miss Bertram, triumphantly, following the lovers as she spoke, "and they shall have their bit of garden just as I have. I asked papa, and he said 'Yes;' and we shall dress alike, and be sisters—real sisters, you know, because—"

Here Miss Bertram paused. Engrossed by her own thoughts though she was, she suddenly became aware that Mr. Graham and Miss Scot were not attending to her. They were walking on, his face bending to hers, her face raised to his, wrapped in each other as well as in their great trouble; and Miss Bertram—poor little Lily Bertram—with her eager good-will, was no more heeded than the shingle beneath their feet. She stood still and looked after them with mortification written on her expressive face. It is so hard to be put by, especially when one's heart overflows with zeal and affection, and the strong desire to serve. But, though Miss Bertram was mortified, she was not angry. She loved these two very truly—far too truly to let the ungentle passion of wrath waken in her breast against them. She only gazed after them with something like reproach in her wistful eyes, and sat down on the shingle, wondering, not that they cared so little about her, after all—she was too simple to come to that conclusion—but that they thought so little of her offer about Jane and Louisa. That the two girls should be so well and so tenderly provided for seemed to her so much, whereas Mr. Graham and Miss Scot really appeared to think nothing of it. She renewed the subject when they came back to her, but even then she found, to her vexation and surprise, that the fate of Jane and Louisa was not uppermost with either.

"Dear little thing!" kindly said Lily Scot, with a sweet, sad smile; then she turned back to Mr. Graham, who never so much as seemed to hear that Jane and Louisa had been mentioned, and, walking on to Saint Aubin with unheeded Miss Bertram walking by their side, they at length made her realize that she did not belong to them, nor they to her. They discussed their great calamity; they looked at it under every aspect, and they forgot the eager, wistful face, the tender and sympathizing eyes, and the patient feet of the lit-

tle, kind-hearted maid who was so ready to share her all with Jane and Louisa Scot.

CHAPTER XVI.

TROUBLE is like a wave of that rolling sea by which Mr. Graham had walked on the day when he learned the ruin of Mrs. Scot. It bursts upon the shore of life with foam and fury, seeming to bring destruction in its bosom; and, after spending its wrath and doing its mischief, it falls back and leaves that shore beaten, broken, and disturbed; yet, to a careless eye, looking much the same as ever. So, at the end of a week, matters did not appear to be very different from what they had been before Marshall & Sylvester stopped payment. They gave more than sixpence in the pound—they gave "seven shillings and threepence," said accurate Miss Bertram. Mrs. Scot did not lose much more than half her income; and Mr. Bertram modestly acknowledged that his loss did not exceed six or seven hundred pounds, "which," as Lily Bertram said again, "made a difference." Louisa and Jane staid at home, and did not go and share all the good things Lily had intended for them; but Mr. Bertram, still willing to assist his friend and neighbor, hit on the ingenious plan of making Miss Scot Lily's daily governess. She relinquished her housekeeping duties, and gave them up entirely to Sarah. Mrs. Scot's comforts, too, had to go to the wall—a fact on which that lady dwelt far more bitterly than on her pecuniary losses, for, as she said, with perfect candor, she had never cared about money, which was, unfortunately, very true. So, outwardly, little or nothing was altered. Some pinching had to be practised—Jane and Louisa had to work without their sister's constant help to spur them on; and all Lily's leisure was gone; but, as Mrs. Petherick said, "One can see no great change, you know; and Mrs. Scot eats her cold chicken for luncheon all the same."

A difference there was, however, spite the chicken. That cruel wave had not beaten the shore in vain. Even Edward Graham knew now that he could not marry when the turret

was completed. For a year, for two, for three, perhaps, Mr. Graham and Lily Scot must be content to wait. Until he was a richer man, until Jane and Louisa would either marry or be able to earn their own living, Mr. Graham could not withdraw Lily from her family. Lily acquiesced, but did not think that years would make the difference her lover hoped for. She knew that Jane and Louisa were neither clever nor industrious, and that husbands were more scarce than good-looking girls in Saint Aubin, so she was not hopeful. Mr. Graham, however, would be sanguine, and he gave himself up to his turret with renewed ardor. The mistake which had so disturbed him had proved to be a trifle. It was easily mended, and turned out to be a useful warning, which he took to heart.

That lull which comes after the storm had lasted two weeks, when Miss Bertram, whom he scarcely saw now that she was under Lily Scot's tuition, broke in one afternoon upon Mr. Graham, as he stood in the court, with eager impetuosity in her brown eyes and in her ringing voice.

"O Mr. Graham! what do you think?" she asked.

"I think you a real little nuisance," mentally soliloquized Mr. Graham; but, aloud, he turned to Miss Bertram with a smiling countenance, and said, quietly: "I am not prepared to confess my thoughts on such short notice, Miss Lily, excepting this one, however—I thought this was school-time."

"Oh! dear Miss Scot has such a headache," answered Miss Bertram, dolefully, and shaking her brown head, on which the hot noonday sun was pouring his burning rays; "so she went and lay down; and I came to tell you, not that Miss Scot had a headache, so you need not laugh, Mr. Graham, but that Miss Cowper is coming to look at it."

"My dear Miss Bertram, you speak in riddles. Who is Miss Cowper, and what is *it?*"

Edward Graham spoke rather sharply. The mere name of Cowper had brought a flush of displeasure to his brow.

Miss Bertram parted her hair, shook it back, and looked at him in amazement. Was it possible?—did he not know—had he never heard of Miss Cowper, the great Miss Cowper, Mr. Cowper's rich aunt, and Mr. Lennard's sister-in-law? Why, all Saint Aubin knew Miss Cowper, and she had arrived this morning, and she was coming to look at the turret this very afternoon. Mr. Graham, who had recovered his

composure by this, seemed to hear the news with profound indifference.

"And don't you really know anything about Miss Cowper, Mr. Graham?" pursued Miss Bertram, still amazed. "Why, she is so rich, and she wanted to buy the brown house, and take it away with her, only the council would not sell it to her; and she is going to build almshouses in England; and, when she heard about the turret, she said she would not wonder if you were the very man she wanted. They are to be for old women, who are to wear dimity, says Miss Cowper, and such quaint mediæval caps. Miss Cowper is *so* pious!" added Miss Bertram, under her breath, and with a certain look of awe. "She found me reading Walter Scott last year, and she was *so* angry!"

"How old is Miss Cowper?" asked Mr. Graham, getting a little interested.

"Oh, ever so old!" honestly answered Miss Bertram—"forty at least—too old to be a sister, I suppose; but she dresses almost like one, all in black and white. I suppose she is very good," meditatively added Lily, as if black and white were somehow or other associated with goodness.

"I suppose so," answered Mr. Graham, smiling.

"Lily, what *are* you doing here?" remarked Mr. Bertram, who now came down the steps and looked somewhat austerely at his daughter.

Miss Bertram answered that Lily Scot had a headache.

"Which is no sufficient reason for your hair being so very untidy," was the paternal rejoinder.

Lily Bertram hung her head abashed, shook her locks with some penitence, and stole away.

"I suppose Miss Bertram has been telling you that we may expect the visit of Miss Cowper presently?" remarked Mr. Bertram, whose real grievance with his daughter was caused, not by the untidiness of her hair, to which he was accustomed, but by her having anticipated him in the delivery of this piece of news. "A very remarkable person is Miss Cowper. I shall be happy if this little turret of Miss Bertram's is the means of recommending you to her attention."

Edward Graham bowed stiffly. The expression of "this little turret of Miss Bertram's" grated on his ear; moreover, Miss Cowper's name was displeasing to him, and even

the chance of building her almshouses lost some of its attractiveness when he remembered that she was Mr. Cowper's aunt.

"Your friend, Mr. Cowper, is her favorite nephew," continued Mr. Bertram, "but, unfortunately, her large property is not at her own disposal. If she had married, indeed, it would have descended to her children, but she has remained single, and the inheritor of all her wealth is a distant cousin—a Mr. Cowper, whom she has never seen, and cannot endure—a sort of cotton man," continued Mr. Bertram, fastidiously flashing his diamond ring. "Very absurd, though, to be sure, we must remember that it was another cotton man who left her all this wealth two years ago, and so I suppose he wished it to go to cotton."

"A cotton lady!" ironically thought Edward Graham, whom these preliminaries by no means attracted toward the expected visitor.

When he came later in the day, he found her in the court. Mr. Lennard stood by her side; Mr. Cowper lounged gracefully about, looking airy, lazy, and *débonnaire;* and Mrs. Petherick, all eagerness, ardor, and devotion, had evidently joined the rich lady with the intention of clinging to her.

"Ah! Mr. Graham, we have been wanting you so much," she cried, gayly; "now do come and explain it all, if you please."

And, without waiting for his reply, she turned to Miss Cowper and said, confidentially: "I really ought to know everything about this house, for I can never help looking in at it—it is such a gem; but Mr. Graham will tell you better."

An audacious statement, if ever there was one, for Mr. Bertram had kept Mrs. Petherick at arm's length all this time, and she had come with Miss Cowper uninvited, in the desperate hope of forcing an entrance at last.

"Yes, do tell us all about it, my good fellow," said Mr. Cowper, still lounging about; "we are dying to hear you."

Mr. Graham looked coldly at the speaker, then turned to Miss Cowper and bowed gravely. Miss Cowper was a small, slight, fair woman, with light eyes and unmeaning features. There was nothing in her appearance to interest and attract—perhaps the only remarkable point about her was her dress—black and white, as Lily Bertram had said, and so rigid in its

outlines, so coarse in its texture, so uncompromising in its austere simplicity, that Mr. Graham shrewdly concluded the wearer thereby sought to make up for the insignificance of her person.

"My dear Miss Cowper, this is Mr. Graham, the architect, and this is the turret," said Mr. Lennard, with a good deal of impertinence.

Miss Cowper bowed very slightly to Edward Graham, and looked hard at the turret.

"Very fine," she murmured, "very fine. Earnest as all mediæval work, or as all work derived from mediæval design must be."

"This is as much Renaissance as mediæval," bluntly said Mr. Lennard. "A mixture of the two styles."

"Then it is vile!" emphatically retorted Miss Cowper—"all mixtures are vile," she added, after a pause, given to meditation.

"To be sure they are," airily remarked Mrs. Petherick.

"You prefer early Gothic?" suggested Edward Graham.

"I do, Mr. Graham. My almshouses shall be pure Gothic. I should like when you are at leisure to have a little earnest conversation on the subject of these almshouses. I have no doubt that you could give me many valuable suggestions, Mr. Graham."

Mr. Graham bowed, and was wholly at Miss Cowper's service; and Mrs. Petherick, nodding at him, but addressing Miss Cowper, said, in her cheerful way:

"Mr. Graham is ours, Miss Cowper, but we will lend him to you. We are very proud of Mr. Graham in Saint Aubin, Miss Cowper."

"If my nephew," said Miss Cowper, ignoring Mrs. Petherick, and directing a severe look at the sinner who was just then kicking a pebble with the toe of his boot—"if my nephew had persevered in architecture, I need not now apply to you, Mr. Graham."

"My dear aunt," said Dick Cowper, gracefully, "what a blessing then that I did not persevere, for Graham is really what I should never have been—your man."

"An architect wanted me to have Tudor or Elizabethan almshouses," pursued Miss Cowper; "but, as I told him, those styles are vile, and—"

"Vile!—nonsense, Louisa!" interrupted Mr. Lennard; "there is nothing finer that Elizabethan."

"The spirit of it is vile because the age was vile," persisted Miss Cowper, whose pale cheek grew slightly flushed as she uttered this denunciation. "The Middle Ages were earnest, and their spirit was earnest."

"To be sure," chimed in Mrs. Petherick; "and that is why it is such a treat to look at this house."

"So I say, Mrs. Petherick," answered a loud voice from above—"a treat to look at this house—ha! ha!"

Mrs. Petherick looked up and saw Captain Jekyll's red face and goggle-eyes beaming down upon her from a first-floor window. She stared at him in silent consternation. The captain had got into Mr. Bertram's, he had invaded that last stronghold of Saint Aubin society, he had conquered, he was within, and she, Mrs. Petherick, was without. It was Mr. Lennard's doing, of course; but, no matter through whom the deed was done, Mrs. Petherick felt defeated. The captain meanwhile enjoyed his victory, and waved his hand at his fair enemy, and even kissed his fingers to her before he drew in his head and joined Mr. Bertram, who, with unwilling courtesy, was doing the honors of his house to his unwelcome visitor.

"The spirit is everything," continued Miss Cowper, looking hard at Mr. Graham, as if to make sure that he understood her.

"To be sure it is," cried Mrs. Petherick, rallying; then, her spirit being seized with a brilliant idea—no less than to go and tell all Saint Aubin how the captain had got in to Mr. Bertram's ("all that horrid Mr. Lennard's doing, you know!")—she took a hurried leave of Miss Cowper, who gave her a broad stare and resumed her lecture.

"It was only the other day that I said to my friend and neighbor, Mrs. Fay—you have heard of Mrs. Fay, Mr. Graham?—'The spirit, Mrs. Fay—'"

"And oh! Miss Cowper, how do you like it, and is it not beautiful?—and it is my turret, you know." So broke in Lily Bertram, who now came skipping down the steps, with her shining gold and brown hair neatly tied up behind her small, well-shaped head, and her rosy face shining with the recent application of soap and water.

"My dear, it is fine," answered Miss Cowper, without the

least appearance of embarrassment at the apparent contradiction the word implied to her recent declaration that all mixtures were vile—"fine and earnest," she musingly added.

"And won't you get Mr. Graham to build your almshouses?" eagerly cried Lily, whose eyes sparkled at the thought. "He would build you such beautiful almshouses, Miss Cowper."

"You are a dear child!" replied the lady, patting her cheek, and it seemed to Mr. Graham that the words were spoken with a greater look of truth than her language had yet displayed—"a very dear child; and when I build and endow my almshouses, you shall be head sister."

Lily clapped her hands and laughed, but Mr. Bertram, who had joined the group, with Captain Jekyll, of course, drew himself up, and seemed to think this no joking matter. Before he could utter a word, the captain had burst in with a vehement and indignant, "Miss Bertram—the Bertram Lily a sister!—fie, fie!"

"Miss Bertram's birth and position—" began Mr. Bertram.

"Princesses and queens—" interrupted Miss Cowper, a little austerely.

"And I say it is all bosh!" put in Mr. Lennard, striking the pavement of the court with his cane. "Don't tell me about princesses and queens, Louisa. All tnose mediæval people were Little Johns and Robin Hoods."

"Little Johns and Robin Hoods!" repeated Miss Cowper, with a stare; "what do you mean, William? Do be earnest!"

"And so I am. I tell you all those people used the longbow. That's what I mean."

His tone was aggressive and sour. Mr. Bertram looked fastidious, and smiled at a butterfly which went bobbing past. Captain Jekyll shook his head in a fashion that meant anything any way; Mr. Cowper walked out of hearing; Miss Bertram looked a little dismayed, and Miss Cowper ineffably disgusted.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bertram—so glad to have seen your beautiful turret!" she said. "Good-morning, Mr. Graham. I admire the result of your labors prodigiously. I shall be so glad to have a little earnest conversation with you."

She walked away, followed by her nephew and brother-in-law, and by Captain Jekyll, who was "charmed, ha! ha!"

and accompanied to the gate by courteous Mr. Bertram. Lily, however, remained behind, and, raising herself on tiptoe, half whispered in Mr. Graham's ear:

"How cross *he* is! It's all that horrid hedge, you know."

Mr Graham did not answer, yet he, too, was struck with Mr. Lennard's manner. His old uneasiness came back, and he again mentioned it to Lily Scot. He went to see her that evening in her mother's house, and found her sitting up with Jane and Louisa, patiently hearing them through their lessons, and, though looking pale, professing herself "quite well."

"So absurd of her, you know," murmured Mrs. Scot from her sofa. "Any one can see, Mr. Graham, that she is quite ill, and ought to be in her bed."

"She certainly ought not to be listening to Jane and Louisa," a little indignantly replied Mr. Graham. "My dear Lily, do let me put these books away."

He stretched out his hand toward the offending volumes, but, though Lily Scot allowed him to push them to one side, her whole aspect plainly said that she yielded for the time only.

"I must say I think it hard that my daughter should have to be a slave to that little flighty daughter of Mr. Bertram," said Mrs. Scot, in an injured tone. "It quite tells upon her health, I assure you, Mr. Graham."

"O mamma!" remonstrated Lily.

"Nonsense, child; I tell you it interferes dreadfully. Mr. Lennard was quite put out at your not being able to help him with Miss Cowper.—You will be delighted with Miss Cowper, Mr. Graham. She is a very remarkable person —such a fine character, and immensely rich!"

Mr. Graham answered that he had seen Miss Cowper, but expressed no delight; but this Mrs. Scot did not even notice. She was too eager to hear everything about the great lady. What did she say?—how did she look?—did she still wear black serge?—and other questions of the kind, which Mr. Graham answered rather briefly. Purposely, however, he mentioned the almshouses, and the conversation he was to hold on that interesting subject with Miss Cowper.

"Then your fortune is made, Edward!" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, sitting up in excitement. "I was afraid the almshouses were already built, but I am so glad Miss Cowper has not

been able to find an architect to her liking, for, of course, now she will take you."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Scot, but nothing is less certain."

"Mr. Graham, you must excuse *me*. Miss Cowper dotes on my daughter Lily, and she will do it for Lily's sake, I am sure."

This was said with an affronted dignity which allowed no reply. Mr. Graham smiled, but Lily sighed, and Jane and Louisa giggled and nudged each other. Miss Cowper was a standing joke with them.

"Mr. Lennard was with Miss Cowper," resumed Edward Graham, looking at Lily. "I thought his manner harsh and dry. Is there anything new?"

"Nothing new," she answered, hesitatingly; "but Mr. Bertram and he cannot agree about that hedge—it is a pity!"

"Mr. Lennard is a very pig-headed man," said Mrs. Scot, who was unusually wakeful and excitable. "He is all in the wrong. It stands to reason that a gentleman of Mr. Bertram's birth and pretensions would never be so pertinacious about a hedge if he were not in the right."

Mr. Graham looked at Lily, but her eyes were downcast, and she was playing idly with her watch-guard. He dropped the subject until he was taking his leave, and, as Lily saw him to the gate, he then resumed it.

"How will it end, Lily?" he asked.

"Not well," she answered, with a heavy sigh.

"You mean for us?"

"Yes," she replied, in a low tone. "Good-night," and she closed the gate and left him in the long, moonlit street with that last foreboding word to bear him company to the City of Jerusalem. "And yet," thought he, as he walked home, "how can it end badly for me? What have I to do with Mr. Bertram's and Mr. Lennard's disagreements? Is not my business quite distinct from theirs? Dear Lily! it is all her tender affection that makes her so anxious."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE long-impending storm broke the very next morning. The sun had just leaped up into the chill blue sky, and not one of the workmen had yet come, when Mr. Graham went to Mr. Bertram's house, and, standing in the court, looked at the turret in the swift-growing light of the spring morning. He had not been there five minutes when Lily Bertram made her appearance.

"Good-morning, Mr. Graham," said she, and she sighed.

"Good-morning, Miss Bertram," answered he, as shortly as good manners allowed.

"It is a beautiful morning," said Lily, looking miserable; "but then, where's the use of it, when one wishes that one were dead?" And Miss Bertram, having uttered this tragic sentiment, looked ready to cry.

Mr. Graham was surprised. Lily was bright as sunshine, and to see her depressed, and with impending tears, seemed as unnatural as if rain had begun to fall with the May sun shining in the sky.

"Why, what has happened?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, the most dreadful things!" exclaimed Miss Bertram, clasping her hands, and looking more tragic than ever. "And oh! Mr. Graham, if you could do any good!"

"What is it, and what can I do?" he asked, uneasily.

"Papa and Mr. Lennard have quarreled," she answered, and she burst into tears.

Mr. Graham expected this, yet he felt like one who has got a blow, but is at first too much stunned to know how or by what he is injured.

"Quarreled?" he repeated, vaguely.

"Yes," sobbed Lily, "they have quarreled, oh! so dreadfully, all about that horrid hedge. Mr. Lennard wants to cut it down and build a wall ever so high, and that would ruin the view, and papa will not allow it, and the hedge is mine, and they quarreled last night, and papa is gone this morning to get the best lawyer in Dieppe, and if they come to law it can never be made up, you know," said Lily, looking gloomy.

It is a law of our nature that we cannot hear of anything which may affect us without considering especially its

bearings on our own concerns. The long friendship thus broken, the worship given and received ending thus, were not foremost in Mr. Graham's thoughts as he heard Lily, but he did think of the task he had undertaken, and of how it might fare with him if the two men on whom he relied were at issue. He knit his brows and bit his lip.

"My dear Miss Lily," said he, "you who are Mr. Lennard's ward and goddaughter, I believe, can interfere—"

"Oh, no!" interrupted Lily, wofully; "papa has forbidden me to do so."

"Then I cannot," said Mr. Graham—"I cannot take the liberty."

And he turned away as he spoke to address Monsieur Merle, who just then came in. Lily stole away with downcast eyes and depressed looks, and, as soon as she was out of hearing, Monsieur Merle, to Edward Graham's surprise, entered on the subject of the quarrel.

"Poor little Mademoiselle Bertram!" said he, as his look followed her, "she feels it. Of course, she does, the child. She is, as it were, between the anvil and the hammer. It is unfortunate when two such friends quarrel, Monsieur Graham; but, of course, it will not affect our work?"

And, as he said "of course," he looked hard at Edward Graham with his frank blue eyes.

"I hope not, Monsieur Merle," answered the young architect. "Both gentlemen are solemnly pledged to me, who have nothing to do with their quarrel."

"And you have got it down in black and white?"

"I have, Monsieur Merle."

Monsieur Merle looked relieved, then the cloud came back to his honest face.

"And yet people do get out of black and white," he said, with a puzzled look at Edward Graham.

"Let us hope they will not attempt to do so in this case," answered the young man, cheerfully; "besides, they may make it up, Monsieur Merle."

"Monsieur, people who quarrel about hedges, walls, rights of way, and so on, never do make it up," was the grave reply.

The young architect laughed, but he was disturbed at heart, and his uneasiness induced him to call that same afternoon on Miss Cowper. His secret hope was that he should

see Mr. Lennard, and perchance throw in a good word, or at least learn something concerning the quarrel, which was then the talk of Saint Aubin. "Ill news travel fast," says the proverb—perhaps because the sufferers themselves are so quick to spread the tidings.

There seems to be a strange haste in the heart of man to probe misfortune, and reach at once its sorest point. To know more (and to know it sooner) of what he could not help considering a personal evil, was Mr. Graham's real object in calling on Miss Cowper. It was disappointed. Mr. Lennard was out, and Miss Cowper was not merely in the dining-room on the ground-floor, but indifferent to everything save the warming of her little fat feet in the sun, which came in through an open window affording a green glimpse of garden, and the contemplation of some lines which she had been tracing on a broad sheet of paper.

"The ground-plan of my almshouses, Mr. Graham," said she, with a little flourish of a large paper-knife. "You come in most opportunely. I wanted to consult you. Which would you advise—a large dormitory or cells? Which do you consider most mediæval? *That* is my standard," added Miss Cowper, rubbing the paper-knife along her little snub nose, and looking, or trying to look, hard at him through her little, pale-gray eyes, that had so little meaning in them.

"Cells are for monks and nuns," began Mr. Graham.

"Just so," interrupted Miss Cowper, "and cells it shall be."

"Dormitories are—"

"Vile," put in Miss Cowper, emphatically—"my own opinion quite."

Mr. Graham did not think it worth his while to set Miss Cowper right as to his real meaning.

"I am a very earnest person, Mr. Graham," resumed Miss Cowper, knitting her smooth eyebrows at him, "and what I mean I go through, as I always tell Mrs. Fay. When will you be in England?"

Mr. Graham hoped to be in England by July—by August or September he would certainly be there.

"At that time I shall be at Cowper's Hill. If you will call upon me there, we will choose the site of the almshouses together, and I shall be happy to look at such designs as you may have to submit to me."

"I shall go to England next month for a week or two," said Mr. Graham, "and, if you should then be there, I shall be happy to call upon you, Miss Cowper, and—"

"No, no, no!" she interrupted, waving the paper-knife at him with a sort of scorn for his haste. "Why be in a hurry, Mr. Graham? The Middle Ages were slow, and look at what *they* did! Slow and earnest," meditatively resumed Miss Cowper, shutting her eyes, and going back five hundred years in her musing mood. "I would rather," she continued, still with her eyes shut—"I would rather, Mr. Graham, that you would kindly mature the thought I am leaving with you. Do not be like my nephew, Richard Cowper, fickle and unstable. Richard has disappointed me," she added, with some gloom. "He ought to be a great architect by this, and what is he?" said Miss Cowper, looking hard at Mr. Graham. "Well, then, be not like him. Let these almshouses be as seed in a rich soil—in short, you know what I mean."

Edward Graham smiled and bowed, then said, quietly:

"Mr. Lennard is a practical man; he might suggest—"

"Don't—don't!" interrupted Miss Cowper, rapping the table hard with the paper-knife, and looking rather cross—"don't, Mr. Graham. Mr. Lennard is odiously practical. I like him exceedingly, but I can't endure his ways. Just now he is in a perfect frenzy about a hedge—an immortal being, Mr. Graham, worrying himself and every one around him about a hedge! If he will go on so, I shall certainly leave Saint Aubin to-morrow," added Miss Cowper, with a touch of temper. "As to the almshouses," she remarked, pushing the sheet of paper toward him, "you will be glad, I dare say, Mr. Graham, to have my ideas on the subject. Here they are, at your service. And do not forget to come and see me at Cowper's Hill. Good-morning, Mr. Graham—so glad to have had this interesting conversation with you!"

"Oh! Middle Ages, grand, heroic, and joyous times," thought Edward Graham, as he left her—"ages of strength, of faith, when the passionate love of saints and the terrible cruelty of all men was at its height—ages of noble churches, abbeys, and cathedrals, of color and gorgeous raiment—have you come down to this, and is this little, pale, silly woman in black serge your expounder? No—surely, no!"

Somewhat relieved by this little burst of indignation,

Mr. Graham began to think that matters might not be so bad as he had feared in the morning. It was a quarrel—of that there could be no doubt—and a quarrel between two of the leading men in a small place is always pregnant with more or less mischief. Nevertheless, he might be able to finish his turret in peace, and that, it must be confessed, was the all-important question for Mr. Graham.

The young architect's time was not all spent at Mr. Bertram's house. He gave, indeed, far more of his attention to this great task—the first great task of his life—than men of his profession usually bestow upon their labors; but he also devoted some of his leisure to the studies which had first brought him to Saint Aubin. The rest of this day he passed in the old part of the town, studying some fine carving; and it was only late in the afternoon, and near sunset, that he went and gave a look—he could scarcely have slept well without doing so—to his turret. That turret was now very nearly completed, and, though the scaffolding required by the workman who did all the fine Gothic carving still marred the fairness of its proportions, Mr. Graham's practised eye could imagine the distinct outlines, the steep roof, and its graceful vanes, as they would soon appear clear and free on the pale Norman sky. That Norman sky was now fiery red; crimson streaks told of sun and wind for the morrow, and there was a spring sharpness in the air which did not belie that promise. From the scaffolding on which he stood, Mr. Graham could have surveyed a wide and clear prospect, had he so chosen; but what were Norman field and valley—what were port, sea, and shipping, though clad in the beauty of a fine evening, to the sharp carving of a thistle-leaf, and the graceful curve of a trefoil?

"It looks well," he murmured to himself, in calm content—"it looks well, indeed; the old carvers themselves would say so, could they look out of their graves and see the work of their successors."

Mr. Graham, as we said, stood on the scaffolding, and, as this was on a level with one of the upper windows of the turret, he thence saw the room within. It was finished, so far as building went, but still white with dust and plaster. No door yet divided it from the staircase, which looked like a dark gap, till in that blank aperture suddenly appeared Lily Bertram's pale, scared face.

"O Mr. Graham, do come!" she said, in a voice so full of entreaty that, without a word of objection, he stepped in to her. "This way," she said, quickly, going down. "Oh! don't stop to ask—I will tell you presently. Oh! do come, Mr. Graham!"

He followed her till they stood below, and then, anticipating his questions, and perhaps also his reluctance, Lily said again, but with some passion:

"You must come—some one must come. Papa and Mr. Lennard are having such a terrible quarrel in the garden, and, O Mr. Graham! Mr. Lennard is beside himself, and I am afraid—I am afraid!" she said, with a wild look up in his face, and seizing his arm as she spoke.

She wanted to lead him away, and seemed to fear his resistance; but Mr. Graham was not unwilling to accompany her to the scene of action. There is an excitement in the display of human passions, or in the mortal danger of some suffering creature, which few can resist. That it was which gave its frightful fascination to the dying struggles of gladiators, even though their passion was for the mere preservation of life. That it is which gives its terrible charm to the battle, the siege, and the shipwreck—to all in which man seeks to prevail over man, or to conquer the cruel might of Nature. But matters had not come to such extremities when Mr. Graham reached the scene of the conflict, and yet Mr. Lennard had carried on the war with a high hand.

Throughout the difference, Mr. Bertram had been so determinedly polite, in his defense of his daughter's rights, that he had prolonged its duration to what, considering Mr. Lennard's irascible temper, might be held unnatural limits; but even his long patience had given way, and a breach had come, as Miss Bertram had told Mr. Graham that morning, and Mr. Bertram had gone off to Dieppe to get legal opinion on the subject. Perhaps Mr. Lennard was not aware of this fact; perhaps, even had he known it, it would only have spurred him on. Did he rely, for good reasons of his own, on Mr. Bertram's continued forbearance, or did he, as Edward Graham often thought later, wish to sever his long friendship, and give up a worship which had perchance grown troublesome? It is hard to say, but he certainly took the best means of accomplishing the latter object. Whether or not he knew the purpose of Mr. Bertram's journey, he knew

at least that he was away, and, taking advantage of the fact, he procured workmen, and had the hedge cut down to the very earth. The work of destruction had gone on without hinderance or interruption. The hedge, which divided a field belonging to Mr. Lennard from the end of Mr. Bertram's long, straggling garden, was wholly invisible from the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Mr. Bertram was away; Lily had spent the day at Mrs. Scot's; the servants had kept in-doors, amusing themselves in the kitchen while their master was absent, and no one even suspected what was going on, till Mr. Bertram, on his return, and being still elated with the favorable opinion he had got in Dieppe, went to look at the hedge with secret triumph in his heart. He found it cut down, torn up, utterly destroyed, its promise of May blossoms ruthlessly annihilated, and a little bird, which had made its nest in the thickest boughs, fluttering around the spot with a low, pitiful cry. No barrier, no defense now stood between his land and Mr. Lennard's field, where a dun cow was grazing quietly the sweet low grass, while the long, red evening light passed over the landscape with that serene beauty which seems to set at defiance man's pitiful cares and poor, mean passions.

All might still have gone well, or at least peaceably, if Mr. Bertram had been allowed to get over his natural indignation in silence and in solitude; but it unfortunately happened that, when his resentment was at its height, Mr. Lennard came up to the spot, walking through his field with a workman behind him. To all appearance he no more saw Mr. Bertram than if the place where that gentleman stood had been filled with mere vacant air.

"You will see to that early to-morrow, Mathieu. Dig deep; I want a good wall, a thick wall, a high one. I want to be at home on my own land, and not to be overlooked by troublesome and impertinent neighbors."

"Mr. Lennard," said Mr. Bertram, who was very white, "you have taken a rash step."

"You heard," said Mr. Lennard, turning to Mathieu—"a high wall, above all things."

Mr. Bertram stepped across the boundary-line where the hedge had been.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, walking up to him.

"Trespass, if you dare!" cried the other, turning upon

him with the fierceness of a tiger.—"Mathieu, I call you to witness that this man is on my land."

Mr. Bertram drew himself up with some scorn.

"The possession of land is a novelty to you, Mr. Lennard," said he, with a smile which exasperated his enemy.

Mr. Lennard was a vulgar man by nature. His wrath now found a vent in oaths and unseemly language, and Miss Bertram, who had come up unseen, heard him with horror and fear. She ran up to her father, and, throwing herself between him and his enemy, she cried, in her passion:

"Oh! you bad man, how dare you be so wicked!"

"Just hear the little beggar!" answered Mr. Lennard, with a scornful laugh, and still more scornful forefinger. "Mathieu, you see her—"

"Miss Bertram," interrupted Mr. Bertram, turning on his daughter with a sternness to which she was unused, "I command you to leave this spot immediately."

The child drew back half afraid, but, though she obeyed this imperative behest, it was only to go and fetch Mr. Graham.

When the young man came up, the two quondam friends stood face to face, silent, angry, with pale faces full of wrath and hate.

"So you are come!" said Mr. Lennard, turning on Mr. Graham with anything but a friendly aspect. "Well, I call you to witness that this man is on my land—you see him—he is on my land! I have warned him off, and he is still on my land. Remember it."

So saying, he walked away through the field, followed by the workman. Not till he was out of sight did Mr. Bertram condescend to step back to his own side of the hedge, and then he assumed a more composed, collected, and condescending look and manner than ever.

"A very ill-bred man," he apologetically remarked to Mr. Graham. "That hedge was very fine, and very old. The evil is irreparable. It was barbarous to cut it down; it pained me to see it lying withered on the earth, all its loveliness destroyed; the birds'-nest, too, is gone—my little daughter was very fond of that nest. The same birds came every spring; but Mr. Lennard never had the least idea of refinement."

And so he talked, treating the quarrel, and even those

violent measures of Mr. Lennard's which had led to it, with the same lofty assumption of gentlemanlike superiority and composure.

"It is a pity matters went so far," Edward Graham could not help saying.

"A great pity," assented Mr. Bertram; "but men of Mr. Lennard's temper will not be quiet. I have committed a great mistake—a great mistake, Mr. Graham. I should have remembered that Mr. Lennard was a *parvenu*, and that a *parvenu's* low nature *will* come out.—Lily, my dear girl, what *are* you crying for?" And, as he put the question, Mr. Bertram kindly laid his white hand on the shoulder of his little daughter, who vainly tried to repress her sobs as she walked by his side.

"I can't help it," half sobbed, half cried Lily. "Mr. Lennard is—is such a bad man! I hate him!" added Lily, stamping her foot, and clinching her little hands.

Mr. Bertram was amazed and even angry (in a calm way) at Miss Bertram's want of dignified composure. He condescended to argue with her on the subject. What could be expected from a man of Mr. Lennard's birth and rearing? Lily heard in silence, but the angry flush remained on her young cheek, and the indignant light in her dark eyes. Mr. Bertram was cool, as became a man fashioned from the rarest Kaolin; but Lily had inherited from her beautiful great-grandmother a more plebeian clay. She felt keenly, passionately, and angrily, and what she felt she showed with the imprudent frankness of daring youth. Mr. Graham, still walking by father and daughter, compared them with one another, and had his own thoughts. But Mr. Bertram's calmness surprised and perplexed him. Was he going to bear so patiently with this gross insult? And, if not, how would it all end?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Long before it sat down to breakfast the next morning, Saint Aubin had discussed the great quarrel, and decided on its merits. Saint Aubin, man, woman, and child, took part

with Mr. Bertram against Mr. Lennard. Saint Aubin, French and British, abused the one and exalted the other. Mr. Lennard's parvenuism especially was dwelt upon with cutting sarcasm. Here was a man sprung from nothing vying with another man in whose veins flowed azure blood; here was a landlord who had not been a year in possession of his present abode disputing the rights of one whose ancestors were actually represented in the world-known sculptures on the walls of the house he lived in! This was bad enough; but what made matters worse against Mr. Lennard was Mr. Bertram's magnanimity. Mr. Bertram had declared that he would not wage war against his daughter's godfather. He would wait till this aberration, momentary he trusted, of Mr. Lennard's intellect had subsided, and then he was sure Mr. Lennard's own good feelings would show him the matter in its proper light. He was afraid, Mr. Bertram was, that their old friendship would never resume its ancient footing; but he trusted that his forbearance would prevent matters from coming to a crisis. Nothing, in short, could be more amiably dignified than Mr. Bertram.

"I suppose he will win the day, so far as opinion goes," thought Edward Graham, as he slowly walked toward Mrs. Scot's that evening. "Saint Aubin is all—"

Here a man coming down the street pushed against him, and all at once exclaimed, in light, cheerful tones:

"My dear fellow, I hope I have not knocked you down!"

"You have not," answered Mr. Graham, rather grimly. "You seem in a great hurry."

"Frightful!" said Mr. Cowper. "Just got a telegram. Most important business. My poor aunt is awfully put out. By-the-by, do get that job of the almshouses out of her. Pity I did not stick to architecture, is it not? But, then, why did not my aunt come into her property in time? Well, good-by. Good luck to you." And he vanished down the street.

"I wonder why I so dislike that man," thought Edward Graham, listening to his distant step. "True, he wronged me, but so long ago. He has forgotten it. Why can I not forget it too?" And he sighed with some compunction as he reached Mrs. Scot's door. He found Mrs. Scot and Mrs. Petherick discussing the quarrel.

"I am saying, Mr. Graham, that only a born gentleman

could behave as Mr. Bertram has behaved," remarked Mrs. Scot, in the tone of one who delivers oracles.

This she said as the young man went and took his usual place nigh Lily Scot, who received him with a smile of shy welcome, while her sisters made room for him with demure gravity.

"But, then, Mr. Bertram is a gentleman, you know," chimed in Mrs. Petherick. "I am sure you are all for Mr. Bertram, Mr. Graham," she added, emphatically.

Mr. Graham did not choose to make any direct answer to this appeal. Mrs. Petherick, not a whit discouraged, continued in the tone of virtue resigned to the incurable wickedness of this world:

"Of course, Captain Jekyll is all for Mr. Lennard. Mrs. Morgan declared it was quite enough to make one unhappy in one's mind to hear how he goes on. 'To be sure, the hedge was yours, sir,' says he, rolling his big eyes—quite frog's eyes, I think. 'You did well to cut it up, by Jove, you did, sir.' Odious man!"

Mrs. Scot, who had heard Mrs. Petherick with some impatience, here remarked, with a look of judicial dignity:

"I must say that Mr. Lennard's conduct in this matter—"

Here the sudden appearance of Mr. Lennard himself, who came in unannounced, with the familiarity of an old friend, checked the flow of Mrs. Scot's eloquence. With a discreet cough she sat up on her sofa and said, benignantly:

"So kind of you, Mr. Lennard! And Miss Cowper, dear Miss Cowper, how is Miss Cowper?"

Mr. Lennard threw himself on a chair, thrust his hands in his pockets, nodded with offensive patronage to Edward Graham, stared at Mrs. Petherick, and only relaxed in his aggressive demeanor when Lily Scot came up to him with a cup of tea. She stood before him sweet and fair, a modest and graceful Hebe, with a cup of good-will in her hand, and gentle peace in her aspect.

"Thank you, my dear," he kindly said. "You *are* a good girl!"

"I suppose dear Miss Cowper has a headache," persisted Mrs. Scot.

"Oh! I hope not," cried Mrs. Petherick, clasping her hands. "Don't say that dear Miss Cowper has a headache!"

"Dear Miss Cowper is a fool!" sneered Mr. Lennard, ignoring Mrs. Petherick. "Come," he added, boring Mrs. Scot through and through with his most gimlet look, "no nonsense. What were you saying about Mr. Lennard's conduct when I came in?"

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Scot, with some spirit; "for you entered the room, Mr. Lennard, before my sentence was finished."

"Not amiss," muttered Mr. Lennard, sipping his tea, "not amiss; but shall I tell you what you were going to say, Mrs. Scot? Why, just what all those fools in Saint Aubin are saying. Mr. Bertram is such a gentleman. Is he? Mr. Lennard is such a *parvenu!* Mr. Bertram is so forbearing! Is he? I'll forbear him!" added Mr. Lennard, viciously. "Tell him that when you see him, Mrs. Scot," added Mr. Lennard, with a short, dry laugh. "Forbearing! Oh! yes, all Saint Aubin has taken up the song. Mr. Bertram is so forbearing because he is such a gentleman. Is he?"

A dead silence followed Mr. Lennard's words. Mrs. Petherick closed her eyes in ineffable disgust. Jane and Louisa looked half frightened, and their elder sister sat with downcast look and dejected mien. Mrs. Scot looked, as she felt, much affronted, and Edward Graham, watching every turn of Mr. Lennard's angry face, and construing his offensive manner to himself, wished with a sigh that his turret were finished, and he well out of all this. Lily Scot's soft voice broke the awkward silence.

"Another cup of tea, Mr. Lennard?" she said, gently.

"No, my dear, thanks. By-the-by, I forgot, Miss Cowper does send her love, and—"

Here the door flew open, and Lily Bertram burst into the room, flushed and breathless.

"Oh! Mrs. Scot," she cried, excitedly, "only think—" but, seeing Mr. Lennard, she checked herself, and, mindful of Mr. Bertram's lessons, drew up her slight girlish figure with much dignity, and said, with rather a stately bearing: "I shall come again when you are disengaged, Mrs. Scot. Good-evening." And she vanished as quickly as she had appeared.

Mr. Lennard chuckled, and looked, Edward Graham thought, both spiteful and ill-natured; but he rose, too.

"I shall come again when you are disengaged," said he,

mimicking Lily Bertram's manner. "Good-evening, Mrs. Scot."

He nodded all round, and, spite Mrs. Scot's polite entreaties, so left them.

When the great gate had fairly closed upon the visitor, a clamor against him rose in Mrs. Scot's sitting-room.

"Mr. Lennard is getting quite odious," said Mrs. Scot, still affronted.

"My dear Mrs. Scot," said Mrs. Petherick, rising to go and tell Mrs. Morgan what had taken place before Captain Jekyll could possibly know anything about it, "if you were not the sweetest-tempered woman—"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Petherick," interrupted Mrs. Scot, with a touch of temper which certainly gave warrant to the truth of her assertion, "but I was never thought sweet-tempered before. I was always considered to have plenty of spirit."

"Sweet-tempered people always have, dear," said Mrs. Petherick, soothingly.

"My dear Mrs. Petherick," rather shrilly exclaimed Mrs. Scot, who was certainly inclined for a quarrel, "what do you mean by calling me dear? I am too old a mamma for that, I assure you."

"But, then, you look so young," pleaded Mrs. Petherick, decidedly alarmed at the irascible mood of her sweet-tempered friend. "Dear Lily's eldest sister, I always say."

Mrs. Scot did not answer. She had calmed down, not so much on account of Mrs. Petherick's discreet praise, as because her little burst of wrath had nearly spent itself. Who has not noticed how one quarrel leads to twenty more? How, when the social air is laden with that fatal electricity, people who really have nothing to do with it yet seem to receive and transmit the primitive shock. This, good reader, was Mrs. Scot's case; she was not really angry at being thought sweet-tempered, nor at being called dear, nor was she foolishly pleased at looking young, but she had been put out by this fatal quarrel of Mr. Bertram's and Mr. Lennard's, and she felt bound to vent her annoyance upon some one. Mrs. Petherick chanced to be at hand—that was all.

"Well, I think I really must leave you," said Mrs. Petherick, with a cheerful assumption of being detained by Mrs. Scot and her family, and of tearing herself away—"so sorry;

I always do enjoy my evenings here so much. Good-night, dear" (this "dear" was for Lily, not for Mrs. Scot)—"good-night, Mr. Graham—*good*-night Mrs. Scot." And so, with cheerful good-nights, and graceful nods and smiles, Mrs. Petherick took her leave.

"I wish Mrs. Petherick would not come so often!" crossly said Mrs. Scot. "As to Mr. Lennard, I never wish to see him again."

"There never was such a bear!" cried Louisa and Jane in a breath. "And Lily," giggled Jane, "*did* you see how grand Miss Bertram looked?"

"Hush!" softly said Lily.

Even Mr. Graham, though habitually reserved and silent, should speak.

"That man means mischief," said he, looking at his betrothed, who, sighing over her work, said, a little dreamily:

"I wonder if Mr. Richard Cowper could interfere before it is too late?"

That look of ill-subdued scorn which, do what he would, always rose to Edward Graham's face when he heard the name of the man whom he disliked, now flashed across it as he said:

"Don't you know Dick Cowper yet, Miss Scot? I met him a while ago. He had just received a telegram summoning him home to England—on most important business, of course," ironically continued Edward Graham.

Miss Scot smiled demurely, but did not commit herself either way by uttering a word. The mischief which Mr. Graham feared, and which Miss Bertram had come to tell, he did not learn until the next morning. The young man had staid within to write several letters, one of which was all-important, in his opinion. It was addressed to an old schoolfellow of his, who was now a contributor to the *Building Review*. Edward Graham was urging him to come over to Saint Aubin and look at his work. "I do not ask you to praise what you may think worthy of censure," wrote he, "but simply to see what I have attempted. If I deserve praise, you will give it ungrudgingly, I know, and it will do me a world of good; and, if I deserve censure, I shall learn from your blame what I have failed in. Moreover—"

Here a sound of voices below made Mr. Graham lay down his pen and listen.

"The City of Jerusalem," Miss Cowper was saying—"now that is earnest."

"It is a very old house," said Lily Scot's soft voice.

"Mr. Graham lives there, I know," put in Miss Bertram's gay tones.

"Well, but where is the carriage?" urged Miss Cowper—"where can it be?"

"Here," said Miss Bertram. "Come in the yard with me, Miss Cowper."

Edward Graham put by his writing, went down-stairs, and entered the yard of the inn. He found Miss Cowper and her two companions already there, and a traveling-carriage, to which the horses were even then being harnessed, told her errand. Miss Cowper was going away.

"There's Mr. Graham!" cried Miss Bertram.

Miss Scot blushed and smiled, and Miss Cowper gave him a patronizing nod.

"Good-morning, Mr. Graham. I am going, as you see; I could stand Mr. Lennard's dreadful matter-of-fact no longer. Where is my carpet-bag? I never travel with more than a carpet-bag, Mr. Graham. I am glad to see you, and to express to you in person what I feel on the matter of Mr. Lennard's conduct to Mr. Bertram. To summon a gentleman of Mr. Bertram's birth, breeding, and position—a man who can trace back his ancestry to—to—in short, to summon him for trespass, it is vile, Mr. Graham—vile! I resolved to show my disapprobation at once by leaving Mr. Lennard's house, and I would not even drive off from his door. Besides," added Miss Cowper, with a suddenly sharp and shrill voice, "Mr. Lennard wanted to draw me in. Mr. Lennard wanted me to give my money to his schemes. It is not because I have some money," continued Miss Cowper, with much heat, "that I am going to squander it on Mr. Lennard's hobbies about polytechnics, and institutes, and other heathen fancies."

In short, it was plain enough to Mr. Graham that some imprudent attempt of Mr. Lennard's on the purse of Miss Cowper had as much to do with that lady's precipitate departure as her indignation at the summons issued by Mr. Lennard against his former friend. Having seen her carpet-bag stowed into the carriage, Miss Cowper kissed Miss Bertram and Miss Scot. "Good-by, my dear little Bertram,"

said she, affectionately patting Miss Bertram's rosy cheek; "come and see me at Cowper's Hill, and be head sister, you know.—My dear Miss Scot, I am so sorry that I have not seen more of you this time.—*So* glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Graham! Hope you will bear my almshouses in mind."

So saying, Miss Cowper stepped into the carriage, which rattled out of the yard, rattled down the street, and soon vanished.

"I like Miss Cowper," said Miss Bertram, warmly; "she took papa's part, and I like those who like papa, and I hate those who don't like him; and how dare Mr. Lennard summon papa before the *juge de paix*, who is his friend? How dare he!—and for trespass, too! Oh, I do so hate Mr. Lennard!" cried Miss Bertram, in a rage.

Lily Scot tried to soothe her as they went home, Mr. Graham walking slowly by their side; but the summons stuck in poor Miss Bertram's little throat. It made her eyes bright as diamonds, it brought red roses to her cheeks, and even the sunny gleams in her brown hair seemed to sparkle all the more for her anger.

That summons was the event of the day, and Mr. Bertram made the most of it. He ignored it, indeed, and seemed to have forgotten all about such a trifle, until some indignant friend reminded him of the fact, when he would laugh languidly and utter an "Ah, to be sure!—poor Mr. Lennard!—a very wrong-headed man!" which, so to speak, annihilated Mr. Lennard, and put him entirely out of sight. But, though Mr. Bertram had forgotten all about the summons which was for the morrow, he went a good deal about Saint Aubin all that day, and showed himself far more than was his wont. He was seen lounging on the quays talking to men of every degree in most affable fashion. He looked in at a friend in the reading-rooms (where he was never seen), and chatted and laughed over the *Times* for half an hour. He dropped in at two or three houses where his visits had become as those of angels, few and far between, and where he was welcomed with a rush of loyalty and enthusiasm which a sovereign might have envied.

"I do believe," cried Mrs. Scot, on the evening of that day, addressing her daughter and future son-in-law—"I do believe I never saw Mr. Bertram—our Mr. Bertram—look-

ing more aristocratic, perfect, and handsome—never!" She might have added that never had Mr. Bertram's white hand been whiter, nor had his diamond ring flashed more brightly. "Mark my words, Mr. Graham, you are a witness, and will see it all—mark my words, I say, Mr. Bertram will never have looked more calmly grand than he will look to-morrow."

She spoke triumphantly and with evident enjoyment of the quarrel, which had been a god-send to all Saint Aubin; but Mr. Graham heard her with a grave and anxious aspect. He was, indeed, one of the witnesses summoned by Mr. Lennard to prove the trespass; and, though Mr. Bertram had graciously assured him it did not matter in the least, the young architect was sadly vexed at being mixed up in the contest of these two men. Right, so far as he knew and could see, was wholly on Mr. Bertram's side; and, even though his testimony must needs be limited to facts, he could not, and indeed would not, prevent his feelings on the merits of the case from being seen. Now, Mr. Lennard had been hostile of late, venting on Mr. Bertram's architect some of the irritation which Mr. Bertram himself had caused. He had been carping, unjust, and capricious—what might he not be now?

Miss Scot saw that he was anxious, and she told him so.

"Yes, I am anxious, after a fashion," he said, cheerfully; "and yet you know, my darling, that this cannot really hurt me. I have their pledge—the turret will soon be finished and paid for—what then need I care personally for the animosity of Mr. Bertram and Mr. Lennard?"

No doubt, this was true; but, then, Mr. Graham did not add that he wished in his heart his turret were finished and he in England, there to reap the honor due to all the care, thought, and labor he had bestowed upon it.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the Basse-ville of Saint Aubin, but on the frontier, as it were, of the Haute-ville, there stood then—it has been pulled down since that time—an ancient house, which Mr. Graham had sketched when he first came to the old Norman

city. The house was not very remarkable from an architectural point of view, but it was wonderfully picturesque. Especially had it, midway between the first and second floors in a sheltered angle—for it was full of corners—a little niche with a conical slate roof to it, in which stood the statue of the Divine Mother, with her Babe in her arms, and a vase full of flowers at her feet. The house was dark and old, the statue was much defaced, but the flowers were fresh and bright. They told the story of an ancient faith, and of a worship ever new; of generations that fade away into the dimness of time and of other generations that come up young and strong; of that prayer which ever rises from man's heart to God age after age, as flowers spring from the bosom of the earth year after year. Some such thoughts as these passed through the mind of Edward Graham while he was sketching the gloomy façade, the little niche, and the bright flowers; but he also noticed that the door of the house stood open, and that a good many people passed in and out.

"What is there going on in there?" he asked of a boy.

The boy stared.

"Why, that is the *juge de paix's*," said he.

The next day, his sketch being finished, Edward Graham went in. The *juge de paix* is a magistrate who decides summarily on those plain cases which else might slip out of the meshes of the law. He deals out prison, fine, or mere reprimand, according to his own discretion. Crime and excitement do not haunt that quiet court, which, as a rule, is half empty. Who cares to look at paltry culprits or to hear of trifling delinquencies? It so happened that nothing was going on when Edward Graham entered the low, dark room, very bare and dull, where the *juge* sat at his desk. He was leaning back in his chair, trying to take a nod, in spite of an obstinate fly which would alight on his bald head, and at which he slapped rather viciously with a red-silk pocket-handkerchief. He stared at the young man when he came in, then shut his eyes and made another attempt to doze—in vain, the fly was too much for the law. The *juge* opened his eyes and stared again at Edward Graham, who, having seen enough, walked out.

But very different indeed was the aspect of room and *juge* on the day when Mr. Bertram was to appear there.

The room was crammed hours before the case came on, the *juge* looked grave and consequential. As Edward Graham was going in he saw Mrs. Petherick standing outside in a state of some excitement.

"I was quite time enough, I am sure I was," said she, addressing a little old Frenchman by her side, "but, of course, I thought there were reserved seats for the ladies."

"And were there not?" asked the little old gentleman, dryly.

"No, monsieur, there were not," was the triumphant but injured reply.

"O Mr. Graham, you will take me in!"

But Mr. Graham was already in, the crowd had closed upon him, and, though he looked round on hearing Mrs. Petherick's appeal, he only shook his head, smiled, and disappeared. Indeed, it was plain that, even had he been so inclined, it was too late for him to convoy Mrs. Petherick within.

"So the Petherick Gazette has missed it," said a facetious voice in his ear. "A witness, are you? Lucky fellow!—you will have all the fun!"

Mr. Graham had just time to recognize Captain Jekyll's red face before he made his way to the bench on which the workman Mathieu was already seated, these two being the only witnesses of the case. They had been summoned by Mr. Lennard; Mr. Bertram had called none. All Saint Aubin, French and British, but British especially, had come to see these two men. Every face, every eye, every look was turned toward them. The very windows—the room being on the ground-floor—had been invaded outside, and every now and then Mr. Graham, from where he sat, could catch a glimpse of Mrs. Petherick's hat and feather appearing for a moment, and then again eclipsed by some masculine head and shoulders. He saw it as he saw twenty more of the insignificant details before him, as he saw the crowd, the desk of the *juge*, the low ceiling, the dark walls; he saw these things, but did not look at them; he could look at nothing but at Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram, at the two friends now facing each other in enmity, all the more bitter that the cause of quarrel was so paltry. Mr. Bertram's bearing was characteristic. He looked very calm and dignified, perhaps, too, a little bored. He really seemed a spectator, and an uninter-

ested one, waiting for what was going to take place. Mr. Lennard, on the contrary, was all restlessness and impatience. He bit his nails, he looked at the ceiling, he stared moodily before him. Never had his little bilious face worn a yellower tinge than it did this morning. He looked guilty, if ever man did, and, if the crowd could have committed such a mistake, it would assuredly have set him down as the trespasser.

"I wonder if he repents," thought Edward Graham.

The two antagonists having been called, the proceedings began with a question which soon set his doubts at rest. The *juge de paix* bade Monsieur Lennard explain his grievance.

"Monsieur le Juge, I cannot," deprecatingly answered Mr. Lennard, shrugging his shoulders. "It would not be fair. Monsieur Bertram is not here. I must wait till he comes." The *juge* stared, and there was a loud laugh in the court.

"Monsieur Bertram is present," said the *juge*, after a pause. "He is standing there before you."

Mr. Lennard turned to Mr. Bertram, and Edward Graham, who was watching them both, saw Lily's father wince as he met the pitiless look fastened upon him.

"No," said Mr. Lennard, deliberately, "that is not Ralph Philibert Geraldine Bertram, son of William Philibert Geraldine Bertram; that is Joseph Jones, son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones." And Mr. Lennard chuckled as he uttered the plebeian names, for, though they were lost on the French part of the audience, they had their full effect on the British portion. A long, low murmur rose when he had spoken, then a dead silence fell on the court, and every man stared at his neighbor first, then at Mr. Bertram.

"Perhaps monsieur can explain," said the *juge*, turning a puzzled look on Mr. Bertram.

He got no answer. The son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones stood as when the blow had fallen upon him, but his cheek was sallow, his look was dull, and there were drops of perspiration on his brow. Edward Graham's heart ached for the agony of the man, but at the same time he longed to know more, and he thrust his head forward, and leaned his ear as eagerly as any in court.

"We know no other Monsieur Bertram than this," said

the *juge*, turning a little impatiently to Mr. Lennard; "therefore—"

"He a Bertram!" interrupted the irritable little man, striking the floor with his stick—"he is a Jones every inch of him, a Jones he was born, and a Jones he will die, and a Jones is a Jones," concluded Mr. Lennard, in the tone with which he had once said, "A griffin is a griffin."

"Monsieur le Juge," said Mr. Bertram, with all his old dignity, but Edward Graham noticed that his hand was thrust in his coat-pocket, and the diamond ring kept out of sight, "will you allow me to utter a few words of explanation? You will—thank you. I expected no less from your candor. I am sorry to trespass on your time, but I have been attacked—I must defend myself. The late Mr. Bertram and my mother met in youth. They loved, but were parted by their friends. Each married and had a child. Mr. Bertram's died; my mother's lived. They were free when they met again, and this time they allowed no one to divide them. 'Mary, your son is my son,' said Mr. Bertram to my mother. And it was so. I ought to have been a Bertram, and I became one. I took the position of which I had, I may say, been defrauded, since Mr. Bertram was really the father my mother had wished to give her child. When Mr. Bertram died, and you all have known that noble and generous man, he left us what he had to leave—wealth and name. That is my tale—a plain one, an honest one. I defy my enemies, if I have any, to deny the truth of a word that I have uttered."

This little oration, delivered in fluent French, was spoken with a gentlemanly and temperate candor, which ought to have moved Mr. Lennard himself, but which unfortunately did not.

"Oh, no!" said he, nodding, "I will deny nothing; but I will add something. When Mary Smith, who had been a milliner, died, you put the name of Mr. Bertram's first wife on her tombstone, and she became Constance de Vaux. Ha! ha! And when you married you bribed the *maire*, the late Monsieur Denis, to put the name of Mr. Bertram's dead son on the *affiche*, and to let you sign your real one on the register. Ha! ha! I know all about it!"

"You do," calmly answered Mr. Bertram, "for in this I followed your advice, and you kindly undertook the negotia-

tion with Monsieur Denis. I confess," added Mr. Bertram, with much dignity, "that I was reluctant to let such private matters, relating as they did to the early and unhappy love of my beloved parents, be discussed by idle tongues. I may have been to blame, but delicacy was my motive; and now, Monsieur le Juge, may I beg you to decide this absurd matter of the trespass for which I was brought here?"

And his white hand was brought out, and the diamond ring flashed as brightly as ever, and Mr. Bertram was Ralph Philibert Geraldine Bertram every inch of him once more. He had acted the part so long that even this terrible exposure could not make him leave it off. And then he was so perfect in it, and his handsome person, refined features, white hand, and elegant manners suited it so well, as he knew. The late Mr. Bertram had been a little, short, fat man, with a pug-nose, a good-natured laugh, and a foolish face. Nature had been as niggardly of her gifts to this last scion of a noble line as she had been liberal to his lowly-born step-son.

The son of Mary Smith had early felt that he ought to have been a Bertram. He had early taken the name and assumed the position of his dead step-brother, and, when his mother died, he had quite naturally inscribed the name of her nobler predecessor on her grave. What there was of disingenuousness in such proceedings he had glossed over to his conscience by a law of "the fitness of things" which he had made for himself. His mother was a lovely, elegant woman, naturally refined, and certainly very clever. She ought to have been Constance de Vaux, and to give her that lady's name in death was only a graceful tribute to her many gifts, and so Mr. Bertram, who was an amiable, plausible man, had arranged matters to his own liking without hinderance or scruple. There was no living Bertram to interfere; and the dead, however haughty they may have been, submit patiently enough to greater wrongs than this. An accident had put Mr. Lennard in possession of his secret, but that gentleman kept it well, whether through personal regard or for the exquisite pleasure of seeing all Saint Aubin gulled by this charming impostor, there is no knowing, and so Mr. Bertram was safe till the great breach came, and with it exposure in the face of the little world he had ruled so long. But, the first crushing moment over, Mr. Bertram rallied, and bore himself bravely, and it was with perfect composure that he

put that question concerning the trespass, which was to remind the *juge* that he (Mr. Bertram) had had quite enough of the whole affair. The magistrate turned to Mr. Lennard with an inquiring look.

"Let him go—let him go," said Mr. Lennard, with a sneer. "I have said my say, and that will do."

He walked away with a short, little, wicked laugh, and the crowd dispersed. Mr. Bertram, calm and self-possessed as ever, bowed courteously to the *juge*, and left the court with his usual leisurely gait and bearing. He passed close by Mr. Graham without seeing him, but waved his hand gracefully to Colonel Warner, an old officer on half-pay, with whom he had had a long chat at the reading-room the day before. Colonel Warner looked a little foolish, and nodded hurriedly as he took Captain Jekyll's arm and walked down the street. He had not yet made up his mind as to whether he should cut Mr. Bertram or keep on with him.

"By Jove! sir," said he to Captain Jekyll, "the fellow is such a handsome fellow that he ought to be a Bertram; and, indeed—"

"I tickled him, eh?" here put in Mr. Lennard, with his little, wicked laugh. "I Jonesed him, eh?" he added, thrusting his sallow face under the colonel's very nose.

Colonel Warner drew back, gave Mr. Lennard a broad stare, deliberately turned his back upon him, and, saying to Captain Jekyll, in his loudest and most distinct bass voice, "By Jove! sir, if there's a crawling thing I hate, it is a sneak, sir!" he walked away, and left Mr. Lennard standing alone in the sunlit street, a branded man.

CHAPTER XX.

THE old colonel's verdict was that of all Saint Aubin. Saint Aubin, French and British, did not make up its mind at once how to treat Mr. Bertram's delinquency, but it did not hesitate one moment concerning Lennard. Saint Aubin was very angry at having been cheated so long by the son of Mary Smith and Joseph Jones, but it chose to visit the

heavier portion of its wrath on Mr. Lennard's head. What right had he to deceive them? Why had he not enlightened that innocent, confiding Saint Aubin? Why, possessing such important knowledge, had he abetted the deceiver? His tardy revelation only showed that he was a traitor to his friend, as well as to his fellow-townsmen! After being silent so long, what right had he to speak?—poor little Lily Bertram's godfather, too! It was simply abominable. So spoke Saint Aubin, showing itself very lenient to the *pseudo* Bertram.

Mrs. Scot was more than lenient. Mr. Graham, who had not shown himself at the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold that day, very reluctantly appeared at Mrs. Scot's in the evening. He dreaded the lady's indiscreet tongue and questions. To his relief, Mrs. Scot was too much excited and engrossed by her own feelings to trouble herself with the opinions or sentiments of any other person. On learning the great news, she had at once held a council of war with her three daughters.

"Lily," she had said, with something like severity, "your position as a member of Mr. Bertram's household is one of the greatest delicacy. I trust to your discretion never to forget it.—As for you, Jane and Louisa," she added, turning on her younger daughters, "I beg you will remember that our daily bread hangs on Mr. Bertram's pleasure. We are wholly in his power. You must forget the very name of Jones. As to millinery, and all that, you must never allude to such subjects with Miss Bertram. It would be the grossest breach of the *convenances*. Bertram or no Bertram, Mr. Bertram is still quite rich, and our friend and neighbor. If any fatal mistake should occur, and that, through your folly, or imprudence, or ill-nature, we should lose the support of Mr. Bertram, your mother would never forgive you."

Jane and Louisa protested that they would be discreet, and silent as the grave, and not breathe a word to Lily Bertram which could give that young lady offense.

"Remember!" urged their mother, with an impressive and warning forefinger, "nothing about millinery, or Jones, or all that."

"Oh! no, nothing," cried the girls, who, to say the truth, were rather scared at the whole story; and, though not par-

ticularly discreet, were yet thoroughly alive to the necessity of silence in a matter which concerned their own welfare so nearly as Lily's daily engagement with Mr. Bertram's daughter.

But this mixture of purely personal considerations with Mr. Bertram's exposure and history did not tend to soothe Mrs. Scot's ruffled spirit. Mr. Graham found her sitting up, and fanning her flushed face with her pocket-handkerchief. Lily was engaged with her sisters, as usual, and the light of the lamp which fell on her fair, young face showed Mr. Graham some signs of trouble and disturbance there.

"Are you not well?" he asked, in a tender half-whisper.

"Not very well," she answered, with her gentle smile.

"Who could be well, Mr. Graham?" asked Mrs. Scot, in an injured tone. "I have had spasm all day; but, then, I am of that fine, sensitive nature, like perfect and delicate machinery, that the least thing puts me out of order. I think Mr. Lennard ought to be tabooed out of all decent society for upsetting people so. I am sure, when Mrs. Morgan came in and told me what a dead set he made at Mr. Bertram, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I hope he will never show his face here again. My goodness! Is that he?"

The great front gate had been knocked at and opened, and a visitor was now at the door of the sitting-room; but when that door opened it was not Mr. Lennard's bilious visage, but Miss Bertram's rosy face that peeped in, reconnoitring.

"I was afraid he might be here, you know," said she, opening the door wide, and springing forward into the room with that delightfully free-and-easy motion of youth; "but I am so glad he is not. I hope I shall never see him again, horrid man!" cried Lily Bertram, with eyes that sparkled, half with anger, half with tears. "And yet," she added, laughing, and flinging off her white hood, and throwing it on a chair—"and yet, Mrs. Scot, is it not glorious how, when it came to the point, he could not face papa, but had to give up the trespass. But it was too bad of papa, was it not, not to let me be in court, for then," added Lily, taking her place at the table, and sitting down to it with both her elbows leaning upon it, after her own undecorous fashion—"for then I should have seen it all, you know."

She looked round at them with mingled triumph and regret in her dark eyes. Mrs. Scot looked relieved and yet somewhat perplexed at Miss Bertram's evident ignorance of the facts of the case. Miss Scot said "My dear," because she did not know what else to say. Jane and Louisa exchanged looks, and were beginning to titter when their mother uttered a severe "Louisa, Jane," which made them mute; and Edward Graham, gazing at the child, so bright, so exulting, so unconscious of the shame which had fallen on her innocent head, felt full of great pity. "But it is not over," pursued Miss Bertram, again nodding at them. "Papa went to the *juge de paix's* to show his respect for the law, but it is not because Mr. Lennard has dropped the trespass that papa will drop the hedge. He will have a lawsuit, a real lawsuit, to defend my rights, and the hedge shall be put back, not for its own sake, but for the right," added Lily, with another flash of her fine eyes.

"That child has nothing of her father in her," thought Mr. Graham, who was watching her keenly. "She has not his beauty, but neither has she his shallow, plausible nature. There is in her a deeper strain—the strain, I fancy, of that plebeian great-grandmother, who wore the tricolor cockade, and bade the captain give her back her dead husband."

"I am very sorry all this has happened," murmured Mrs. Scot, who was at a loss how to steer.

"Oh! but I am not," interrupted Lily Bertram, impetuously, "for now we know the real Mr. Lennard, and not the false one, which is a comfort, you know. Oh, that wicked Mr. Lennard!" continued she, meditatively, "what a make-believe he has been all these years! I am so sorry that to-morrow is Sunday, and that the lawsuit cannot begin at once. But papa says it shall be the first thing he sees about on Monday morning."

It had been a great relief to Mr. Graham that, the next day being Sunday, he was not called upon to face Mr. Bertram so soon after his exposure; but Miss Bertram's information concerning the lawsuit filled him with an uneasiness which was at once apparent to her sharp eyes.

"Don't you think papa will win, Mr. Graham?" she asked, earnestly.

"My dear Miss Bertram," said he, rising and trying to look quite unmoved, "I know something of English law in

these matters, but nothing, or worse than nothing, of French law."

With this he took his leave, for, with Miss Bertram's presence, and the restraint it brought, the pleasure of the evening and of Lily Scot's society was gone.

He met Captain Jekyll at the door. At once the captain took hold of him, and, with a knowing nod and a hoarse, confidential whisper, he remarked:

"I say, Graham, the Petherick Gazette has gone over all Saint Aubin declaring she saw and heard it all. 'Did she?' says I—'then she saw and heard with her hat and feather.' Not amiss, sir, not amiss, ha! ha!" and the captain roared boisterously at his own joke.

"Miss Bertram is within, and the poor child knows nothing," Mr. Graham could not help saying.

"Poor little beggar! she will know it soon enough," said the captain. "Don't forget about Mrs. Petherick's hat and feather—not amiss, eh?" and so they parted.

"Poor child!" thought Edward Graham—"poor child! how her little pride will have a fall! And her father—how will the wretched man look when we meet again?"

Nothing could be calmer or more unconcerned than Mr. Bertram's manner when he and Mr. Graham did meet on the Monday morning. They exchanged a few words concerning the turret and its progress, then Mr. Bertram alluded to a vexatious lawsuit which that really wrong-headed Mr. Lennard had forced upon him, and then, with a few graceful words, Mr. Bertram took his leave, and Edward Graham breathed with infinite relief: the unpleasant and dreadful interview was over. Mr. Bertram encountered all Saint Aubin with the same calmness with which he had faced his young architect. He ignored any awkward disclosures. When he spoke of Mr. Lennard, he only alluded to his wrong-headedness; and, altogether, he bore himself with a composure that did credit to his knowledge of human nature. According to the Saint Aubin standard of wealth, Mr. Bertram was a rich man, and money, like charity, covers a multitude of sins all the world over. Saint Aubin liked Mr. Bertram, and did not like Mr. Lennard, so it made the latter its scapegoat, and gave him a convenient accomplice in the deceased Mrs. Bertram. She it was who had wheeled her silly old husband into this guilty fraud, and bribed Mr. Len-

nard to abet her. Young Mr. Bertram had been the victim of this designing pair. He had learned the truth the very day before his marriage, and rushed out of his mother's presence in a fit of despair, and with the appropriate exclamation: "Mother, what have you done?" After a fierce struggle between love and honor, love had prevailed, and the unhappy young man had yielded to his fate. Mrs. Greenacre, who kept the Saint Aubin reading-rooms, had first set this pretty little ball of fiction rolling, and it had gathered a good deal of moss on its way. People forgot that Mr. Bertram did not marry until after his mother's death, and that Mr. Lennard did not come and settle in Saint Aubin until the lady had been a year in her grave. Mrs. Scot, who could have set that little matter right, held her peace, and, indeed, carried the war against Mr. Lennard with more vigor than anybody else. That gentleman's wrong-headedness, as Mr. Bertram leniently called it, proved far more fatal to himself than to the friend whom he had betrayed and injured. The man who reveals a secret trusted to his honor becomes a common enemy. We all have weak places in our social armor, we all resent the cowardly hand that lays them bare, and exposes the bleeding wound to unkind eyes. So Saint Aubin exonerated Mr. Bertram after a fashion, and blackballed Mr. Lennard unequivocally. The man was shut out of the little world around him. In a day, in an hour, he was cut off from life like any mediæval leper, and left to the solitude of his own silent home.

Matters were going on after their old fashion when Miss Bertram, whom Mr. Graham rarely saw now, broke in upon him in her own impetuous way.

"O Mr. Graham! only think," she cried, clapping her hands in great glee, "papa has won the lawsuit. Mr. Lennard must put back the hedge. Is not that glorious?"

"It is, indeed," said Mr. Graham, smiling.

"Yes; and, only think, Mr. Graham, I saw Mr. Lennard yesterday, and he spoke to me—about you."

A slight change passed across Mr. Graham's face. Mr. Lennard had made no hostile sign since the scene at the *juge de paix's;* but when he had seen Mr. Graham at a distance he had avoided him, or passed him by with a sullen and downcast look.

"What did Mr. Lennard say?" he asked, quickly.

Lily took a chair and drew it to the table near which Mr. Graham was sitting with his papers spread before him, for this conversation took place in one of the lower rooms of the house.

"Well, you see," confidentially pursued Lily, resting her rosy cheeks in the palms of her hands, and looking straight at him, as was her wont, "I just went down to the end of the garden and got to the place where the hedge has been, and there was Mr. Lennard on his side. 'Well, Miss Jones,' said he, 'how are you this morning?' Only think how stupid!" said Lily, laughing merrily, "calling *me* Miss Jones. Well, I did not answer, of course. 'And how is the turret going on?' he continued. 'Tell Mr. Graham I want to speak to him.' And, O Mr. Graham!" said Lily, impressively, "he looked so wicked as he said it—just like our old cat Tom when he is going to spring."

The shrewd and pertinent simile startled Mr. Graham no little, but he tried to smile and to say carelessly as he rose and pushed his papers away:

"Well, Miss Bertram, I shall give Mr. Lennard an opportunity of springing upon me without loss of time, for I am going there now."

Mr. Graham found Mr. Lennard going up and down a garden-walk, with a stick in his hand, and hitting the bushes, Tarquin-wise. His reception of the young man was ungracious and ironical.

"Mr. Graham, I believe—I am not sure—yes, it is actually Mr. Graham."

"Mr. Graham would have come earlier had he thought his presence welcome," replied the young man, with some spirit.

"And, pray, what makes Mr. Graham think that his presence is welcome now?" retorted Mr. Lennard, sourly.

"Miss Bertram told me, sir, that you expressed a wish to speak to me, and—"

"Miss Bertram, *alias* Jones, misunderstood me," answered Mr. Lennard, in his usual dry tone. "Pray, how is the turret getting on?"

"I hope it will be finished by the end of June, Mr. Lennard."

"Finished by the end of June," complacently echoed Mr. Lennard—"how delightful! Mr. Graham, I congratulate you,

on my word I do. You can say, like that boasting Roman, Exegi something or other!"

He laughed aloud, and his laugh made Mr. Graham feel decidedly uneasy.

"My compliments to Mr. and Miss Jones," resumed Mr. Lennard, waving his hand in polite dismissal of his visitor. "Delighted to think that the turret will be finished by the end of June. Good-morning, Mr. Graham, good-morning."

Thus dismissed, Mr. Graham went his way, but he thought, as he walked out of the house, and turned toward the old town, "The child is right—that man looks wicked—he is going to spring; and yet I have not wronged him, and what harm can he now do me?"

He had not found an answer to the question as he stood at the door of his inn. He looked up at the two travelers ever journeying above it. He had likened himself to that valiant one pressing on toward the city gates, sure to reach and win the goal of his ambition. Had he been mistaken after all? Was some terrible mischance to step in between him and success? Was he to become that other traveler, footsore and weary, before whom the towers of the fair city are destined to recede forever?

"It cannot be," thought Mr. Graham, impatiently. "Mr. Lennard is a bad, vindictive man, but, even to harm his friend, he cannot harm me. He cannot make the turret fall, he cannot bid my skill to desert me; and, if he should attempt to fail in his part of the contract, have I not got the law to enforce his compliance?"

Life is sometimes as a mysterious dialogue, in which man has barely time to question Fate, when the unseen speaker makes reply. Mr. Graham had not yet entered his room—his step was still on the dark staircase that led to it—when one of the servant-girls came and put a note in his hand. It was from Mr. Bertram and ran thus:

"My dear Mr. Graham:

"I have just learned the unpleasant news through Mr. Cowper. Of course, Mr. Lennard has been only too glad to give you so vexatious a piece of information. Will you kindly call round and give me all the particulars? I shall be at home after two. I am more annoyed than I can well express in words. Yours, very sincerely,

"Bertram."

Nothing, save his anxiety, could exceed Mr. Graham's perplexity when he read this mysterious epistle. That something both unfortunate and important had occurred was plain, and the mere name of Mr. Cowper filled him with the gloomiest apprehensions.

"Of course, all is, or will be, wrong, if he has turned up," thought he, with much bitterness. "And I must wait till two to know. It is enough to drive one mad."

At half-past one Mr. Graham was prowling round Mr. Bertram's house. As two struck he entered it with a beating heart.

He found Mr. Bertram waiting for him, or, rather, reading the newspaper in the dining-room.

"Well, Mr. Graham," he exclaimed, as the young man entered, "what do you think of it? Vexatious, is it not? I suppose you cannot go on with your turret? No, it would not be prudent."

"Why so?" asked Mr. Graham, amazed.

Mr. Bertram stared.

"Think of the risk," said he. "Suppose that it has all to be undone."

It was Edward Graham's turn to stare.

"You cannot mean the turret?" said he.

"My dear sir, what else? You don't mean," he added, opening his blue eyes wide—"you don't mean that Mr. Lennard did not tell you?"

"Mr. Lennard told me nothing," replied Edward Graham, setting his teeth, not to break out of all the bonds of patience at this delay.

"Very like him," murmured Mr. Bertram, with contemptuous pity. "Very like him, Mr. Graham, but very disingenuous."

"For God's sake, sir," cried the young architect, unable to bear more, "tell me the worst at once."

"That," said Mr. Bertram, with unmoved composure, "is not in my power. I can only tell you what the worst may be, not what it is. I sent for you, I confess, to receive, not to give information. However, I see you are impatient. Well, Mr. Graham, my daughter, Miss Bertram, inherits this house from her maternal ancestor, Monsieur Grandjean, a worthy man, but a crotchety one, who made an application to the Minister of State to have it classed

among the historical monuments of the province. I threw in my veto, being then the husband of his daughter, and I was told that the application had been withdrawn. I was deceived. The application was not withdrawn; but you know how matters go on in this unfortunate country—circumlocution-office, sir—circumlocution-office. The application was only going the round of the bureaus; and it seems, Mr. Graham—it seems that Mr. Lennard, as executor of my father-in-law's will, and administrator of his property—a great mistake of poor Monsieur Grandjean's—it seems that Mr. Lennard knew as much all the time. I am afraid that his motive in withholding such important knowledge from me must have been decidedly sinister. However, now that matters have come to a crisis, he has told all to his nephew, Mr. Cowper, who, though only just arrived from England, kindly called round to warn me. He seemed very much concerned for you, Mr. Graham—very much concerned."

Every moment added to Mr. Graham's secret anxiety.

"May I ask how this matter affects me?" he inquired, trying to look calm.

"Oh! to be sure. I forget that, as a foreigner, you do not know. Well, Mr. Graham, here is just an article in the paper to the purpose. The preservation of historical monuments is intrusted to a minister of state, who disposes of a special sum placed every year on the budget. He is assisted by a commission, consisting of eighteen members named by the emperor. The duty of this commission is to keep a list of historical monuments, to allot the sum granted by the state, as before mentioned, for their maintenance, or their reconstruction, if necessary, and to recommend to the minister architects who take charge of them."

The color left Mr. Graham's cheeks at this last significant clause.

"May I ask what else you know, sir?" said he, as Mr. Bertram laid down the newspaper.

"Well, Mr. Cowper declares that the inspector-general who superintends works in execution in every department is coming to Saint Aubin. Mr. Lennard has been apprised of the fact, but with his usual wrong-headedness he has chosen to keep it to himself. Of course, he wanted to annoy me. Well, Mr. Graham, he has succeeded—I am annoyed."

Mr. Graham bit his lip. Annoyance was a poor word,

indeed, to express what he felt, and yet he had a presentiment that he did not know the worst.

"May I ask how far the inspector's power extends?" he inquired.

"That is just it," said Mr. Bertram, in a vexed tone—"it is unlimited. The inspector, for instance, may insist on purchasing this house for the state, and I have no power of appeal—I must submit."

"Surely, that is too arbitrary!" cried Mr. Graham.

"My dear sir, an historical monument is entirely under the control of the state. Mr. Lennard himself can do nothing for or against you now, unless through underhand means. Ostensibly he is as helpless as he has made me. Moreover, we may consider this house and its appurtenances to have passed from our hands so far as building goes. Not one stone have we now the power to add or to remove."

At first the young man could not speak. He was too much overcome at the terrible prospect before him. He saw it all. It was ruin—ruin in money, for he was pledged to men who would hold him answerable for every farthing he owed them; ruin in honor, for if his work was not finished his just fame was plucked from him at the very moment of fruition; ruin in love, for if money and reputation were gone, love too must depart from his life and leave it cold and bare. He rose, he went to the window, he looked at the turret, which rose on the blue air in clear and graceful proportions, and on the pinnacle of which still floated the flag that had been set there the day it was roofed; and, as he looked, a passionate exclamation burst from his lips:

"Good God!" said he, "in what a snare have I fallen!"

A faint tinge of color rose to Mr. Bertram's pale face.

"Mr. Graham," said he, "remember that for my share in this concern you have the honor of a Bertram."

Mr. Graham could have laughed in the bitterness of his heart; but Mr. Bertram had carried on the deception so long, that he really forgot all about his real parentage, till his words woke sudden hope in the young man.

"Let Mr. Lennard take care!" he cried; "if he has set this matter going to annoy you, he is still responsible to me."

"You mean that the loss must fall upon my daughter's estate," said Mr. Bertram, coldly. "Well, Mr. Graham,

that would be just; but Mr. Lennard will not let the world say that he has been instrumental in robbing his ward of her property. Moreover, unless you have a very strictly-worded pledge from him, Mr. Lennard will throw all the blame upon me; say that I had that turret built at my own risk—in short, he will act with his usual wrong-headedness. Now, Mr. Graham, as I am a Bertram," added Mr. Bertram, laying his hand on his heart, and speaking with that patrician air for which Nature had fitted him so well, "I would take on myself this just debt of yours if I had the means; but beyond the sum for which I am pledged to you I cannot go."

"Then I am a ruined man," said Mr. Graham, bitterly.

"Not so," replied Mr. Bertram, laying his white hand on the young man's shoulder, and smiling down at him with his handsome blue eyes. "Perhaps, on the contrary, your fortune is made. The inspector may approve all you have done, and give you other work of the same kind in the province—"

"I am a foreigner," interrupted Edward Graham, with some scorn. "Will a government official employ an English architect when there are clever Frenchmen to be had by the dozen?"

"At all events, Mr. Graham," continued Mr. Bertram, still bent on soothing the exasperated young man, "he may leave well alone, he may not take this work to give it to another. His visit, Mr. Graham, need not be one of condemnation."

"And, if he should condemn, if he should take this work and give it to another man, what becomes of me?" asked Mr. Graham, looking him full in the face.

"Ah! to be sure, that would be most unfortunate," replied Mr. Bertram, evasively; "but we will hope for better things, Mr. Graham, we will hope for better things—only, perhaps, it would be well not to hurry on matters until the inspector has been here. Yes, it would be well."

There was no more to say. Mr. Graham took his leave, but he had scarcely reached the court when he turned back to put a question to Mr. Bertram, which, in the bitterness of his troubled thoughts, he had forgotten. When would the inspector come? But Mr. Bertram had already left the room where the conversation had taken place, and in his stead Mr. Graham found Lily Bertram standing by the table,

with the newspaper in her hand. She turned round as he entered, and he saw that her face was bathed in tears.

"O Mr. Graham!" she began; then she broke down and shook with grief.

"O Mr. Graham!" she said again, shaking back her hair and her tears too from her flushed face, "why am I not twenty-one? You should not lose a sou by me. O Mr. Graham, it will break my heart!"

"Excuse me," said he, in a constrained tone, "I do not understand."

"You do," rudely interrupted Lily, "but you will not understand, just as you would not see me, though I was sitting there all the time behind that desk looking at you—you would not see me, Mr. Graham, and it is very ill-natured of you. I said so only this morning to Lily Scot." Lily Bertram was in one of those moments of excitement when from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. "But it is not because you are so unkind, and will snub me, that I am not sorry to be the cause of such trouble to you," continued Lily, looking at him with bright, tearful eyes. "O Mr. Graham! when I am twenty-one I will pay you every sou that you may lose now—every sou. And, as to the work of the other architect, if they have one, I will get it all pulled down!" cried Lily.

Nothing could be more unlike Mr. Bertram's plausible speech than his daughter's impassioned declaration. Her whole heart was in what she said, and, unkind as she thought him, Mr. Graham was touched with the warmth of the child. He looked at her with grateful eyes, and, taking her hand, he shook it cordially.

"Thank you, my good little Lily," said he. "I like that in you—you are a true one, every inch of you. What you feel you say, and what you say you would abide by—if you could," he added, with a sigh.

"But I can when I am twenty-one," cried Lily, flushed all over with a glow of pleasure and emotion.

"Ah! but where shall I be then?" ruefully said Mr. Graham.

"Oh! how I do hate Mr. Lennard!" said Lily, clinching her hands. "I have no patience with Lily Scot, who will not let me say a word against him."

"Miss Scot does not know this last trait," said Edward Graham, with a sigh.

"Yes, she does," answered indiscreet Lily. "Mr. Cowper told her, and she told me, and she cried, and said she saw now it was all over."

Sudden paleness overspread Mr. Graham's face as he heard that his sentence had been spoken by the lips he loved.

"And I will hate Mr. Lennard, who has done it all," continued Lily. "Sister Martha may scold—I will hate him."

"Good-by," hurriedly said Mr. Graham, turning away. His heart was full, and he could bear no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPENSE was not added to the anxieties of Edward Graham's lot. Mr. Lennard had hurled his thunderbolt with scarce an hour's warning. As the young architect left Mr. Bertram's house, and walked down the street, he was aware of a debonair-looking young man lounging in the sunshine, and coming toward him at an easy pace. It was impossible to turn back, yet Edward Graham would have given something to avoid meeting Richard Cowper just then. Mr. Cowper, however, appeared, as usual, delighted to encounter his old friend.

"My dear Graham," said he, with smiling face and outstretched hand, "so glad to see you—went to the City of Jerusalem, and found two travelers over the doorway, but not the traveler I wanted. If you are going there now, I shall walk down with you—come, now, don't look so glum," he good-naturedly added, reading Edward Graham's dark and troubled face with a smiling blue eye. "That matter of the inspector sticks in your throat. My dear fellow, it is the fortune of war. In life we must take and give. Well, well, you must not look so prodigiously offended, because I mean no sort of harm. I have seen your turret, man, and think it splendid, and the inspector must be an ass if he does not think so too. By the way, why don't you wait for him? You will scarcely have time to come back before he will have visited Mr. Bertram's house."

Edward Graham, who had been walking on, stood still in the street and spoke for the first time.

"Is the inspector actually in Saint Aubin?" he asked.

"He is with my uncle just now, I believe. I went down to tell you. They are going to see Mr. Bertram's house, and you ought to be present."

"I ought, indeed," answered the young man, turning back. "I beg your pardon," he added, after a few seconds, and speaking with evident effort; "I ought to thank you for the trouble you are taking in my behalf, but my mind is engrossed by this matter—"

"Of course, of course," airily interrupted Mr. Cowper; "but don't take it to heart. The inspector is a thorough gentleman, and too good a judge, I am sure, to behave unhandsomely. Why, I declare," he added, as they entered Mr. Bertram's house together, "they are there already. Most fortunate that I met you, ain't it?"

Edward Graham did not answer him. His heart had leaped into his mouth, his dark Italian eyes were devouring the looks, the aspect, the bearing of the arbiter of his fate. He saw standing by Mr. Lennard's side—for Mr. Lennard was there, too, facing his enemy on his own ground—he saw a pale, slight little man, of cool but gentlemanlike aspect, who wore glasses, and listened with courteous but formal attention to the explanations Mr. Bertram was giving. He at once joined the group, and Mr. Bertram promptly introduced him.

"Monsieur Graham, the architect."

The inspector bowed.

"A most interesting dwelling," he said—"decidedly interesting, and of great historical value, as showing us what a private house of small size was three hundred years ago. Pity this fine carving is so much defaced.—Have you been attempting to restore it?" he added, turning rather sharply to Edward Graham.

"I have not," answered the young man. "The new turret was my only concern."

"Ah! the new turret." The inspector raised his glasses to that turret which had so long been Edward Graham's great hope, and he looked at it, alas! very coldly. "Why is it so bare?" he asked, with evident disapprobation. "Why does it not correspond in ornament as well as in shape and proportion with the old one?"

"The outlay would have been enormous," answered Edward Graham, modestly.

The inspector nodded, as much as to say, "Well, it would, indeed."

"Nevertheless," he added, aloud, "that meagre ornament looks incongruous near that rich carving."

Edward Graham bit his lip, and Mr. Lennard laughed, and Mr. Bertram remarked that old and new work rarely went well together.

"I beg your pardon, sir," retorted the inspector, rather sharply, "old work goes very well with new work when this is good. I have just had the town-hall of Rennevaux restored by my best architect, and there is nothing finer in all France."

Mr. Bertram, who was not accustomed to such flat contradiction, raised his eyebrows in dignified surprise, and drew himself up rather haughtily. The inspector continued in a clear, positive, and dogmatic tone:

"This turret cannot remain as it is—it disfigures the rest of the edifice. There must be carving upon it, and carving of the finest quality, similar, in short, to that of Rennevaux. I should like to visit it within, if you please."

Mr. Bertram led the way, and they all entered the unfinished turret. It was still in the roughest state. The inspector said not one word, but nodded several times, and shook his head, as if by no means satisfied with what he saw. When the turret was visited, he proceeded to the other parts of the house, but this time Edward Graham remained behind to brood over his bitter disappointment. He had hoped that a man of experience, taste, and judgment, would say, at least, one kind word, and not one such had fallen from the inspector's lips. His work was going to be taken from him, his cherished task was to be confided to older and more experienced hands, and he was not to have even the poor meed of a little praise. It was hard. He had entered Mr. Bertram's neglected garden. It lay before him in all the freshness and promise of spring—a green spot full of weeds, but also full of beauty. Many a time had he brought his anxious thoughts there, and many a time, too, his ambitious hopes and visions, and now, that all was ending in a dull and heavy cloud, he brought to it his bitter trouble. "They will take that poor turret from me," thought he. "Of course, if they take it, I cannot be actually out of pocket, but good-by to all I had hoped for—ay, good-by forever!"

"Mr. Graham!" said Lily Bertram's light voice behind him. He turned round and saw her coming toward him, all out of breath. "O Mr. Graham, do come!" she said. "Oh! do come—papa wants you. O Mr. Graham, they are going to pull down the turret!"

"What?"

"Yes," said Lily, looking scared, "the inspector said so, and papa is so angry; he bade me look for you. Oh, do come!"

Such a blow as this Mr. Graham had not anticipated, but he would not let it crush him yet. With set teeth and flaming eyes, he walked back toward the house at strides so rapid that little Lily had to run to keep up with him. Black and fierce as thunder, the young man broke into Mr. Bertram's presence, looking round for the inspector, as if he would have annihilated him. All his hot Italian blood was on fire, ready to break forth through the acquired coldness of his habits and early rearing. But Mr. Bertram was alone, though, as Lily had said, in a rage.

"Mr. Graham!" he exclaimed, as the young man entered the room, "that Mr. Lennard's wrong-headedness has gone beyond all bounds; he will certainly drive me to extremities. It must be he who persuaded that absurd inspector that the turret compromises the solidity of the whole edifice. It is atrocious—atrocious, Mr. Graham—to talk of having it demolished, now that it is nearly completed; but that is Mr. Lennard's revenge for his defeat in the matter of the hedge."

"Where is the inspector?" asked Edward Graham, trying to speak very calmly.

"He went away with Mr. Lennard; but, of course, you—"

He said no more. Edward Graham was already out of the room, almost out of the house, borne away by that whirlwind of passion which seizes some men in the crisis of their lives, and which their previous coldness makes all the more terrible to see.

"O papa!" cried Lily, whose teeth chattered with fear, "do you think Mr. Graham will kill the inspector?"

"I hope not," said Mr. Bertram; but he, too, was alarmed at the young man's looks.

Edward Graham was more composed when he was shown into Mr. Lennard's presence, and asked to see the inspector; but, though he spoke in measured tones, there was a dan-

gerous light in his eye which did not escape Mr. Bertram's enemy.

"The inspector has gone to look at the town-hall," he said, cheerfully. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Graham?"

"No, thank you," and the young architect was turning to the door, when he suddenly changed his mind, and came back to the spot where Mr. Lennard stood. His blood had had time to cool, his wrath to change its object, and also to sink deeper, and become more settled in its purpose; but, before he gave it vent, he would make a last passionate appeal to the man before him.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, "can you tell me what the inspector said after I was gone?"

"Well, it is a pity you did go, Mr. Graham—quite a pity; you could, perhaps, have answered that gentleman's objections. You should have staid, Mr. Graham."

"Mr. Lennard, I ask you what he said," was the stern rejoinder.

"And do I understand these technicalities?" exclaimed Mr. Lennard, testily. "Don't ask me the why and the wherefore; all I know is, he said the turret must be pulled down, because, otherwise, it would fall and ruin the rest of the building."

"He said that?"

"He did; but, look here, Mr. Graham, don't let that cut you up. Your builder is answerable to you—put it all on him." And Mr. Lennard winked, and laid his finger to his nose with his dry laugh.

"And you think I am such a base, dishonorable villain as to try and save myself at the cost of an innocent man—you think I will do another the wrong which, to your eternal shame and disgrace, you are attempting to do me! Mr. Lennard," he cried, the veins in his forehead starting, "I would die a beggar before I would betray my honor as you are betraying yours in this matter."

"Suppose, Mr. Graham, you kept a civil tongue in your head!" said Mr. Lennard, looking bilious.

"Civility and your actions cannot go together, Mr. Lennard," answered the young man, with a bitter laugh. "You have sacrificed me, an innocent man, to your paltry revenge, and, if my turret falls, it is for the sake of that miserable hedge. You may ruin me—I believe you will, for I am a for-

eigner here, and helpless in the hands of the strong—but remember," he added, lifting up a warning forefinger—"remember that, if your gray hairs save you from some of the consequences of evil-doing, they only make deeper and more terrible the gulf which already divides you from all honest men in this place."

He had meant to appeal to any lingering sense of justice which might remain in Mr. Lennard's heart, but wrath and passion had proved too strong, and with this bitter denunciation he left him.

Mr. Lennard stood speechless for one minute, then, suddenly rallying, he called out in a voice of thunder:

"Louis, imbecile, idiot, come here!"

A thin, weasel-faced servant-man answered these various appellations, and appeared at the door of the dining-room with a broom in his hand.

"You see that fellow going off there!" cried Mr. Lennard, pointing through the open window to Mr. Graham's receding form. "Well, the next time he comes to this house, you will please to kick him out."

Louis heard his master with perfect equanimity, being, indeed, accustomed to such storms of passion, but he mildly objected:

"Will monsieur please to tell me how I am to kick out Monsieur Gram? Because," continued Louis, with great composure, "I do not think Monsieur Gram would let me do it."

"You are an idiot!" angrily said Mr. Lennard.

"That is why I want to be instructed by monsieur," retorted Louis, whose revenge for his master's contumely was ever taken out in exasperating coolness.

But monsieur only answered, savagely:

"If that man ever walks in here again, you walk out the next moment. Do you hear?"

Louis had heard, and he said so. But the behest was unneeded. Never more did Mr. Graham cross the threshold of the man who had so cruelly and wantonly wronged him.

The inspector had left the town-hall when Edward Graham reached it. He was gone to the brown house. Off to the brown house rushed the young man; but when he got there he only found the court, the house with the trefoils, and the brown house itself, all looking tranquil, ancient, and

half asleep in the May sun. There had been some mistake. The inspector had never been there. The young man stood irresolute for a moment, then, having had time to cool, he considered that a public building, or the open street, was not the place to hear the inspector's verdict. He resolved to find out at what hotel he stopped, to get an interview with him, and fight his hard battle as well as he could. The inspector was staying nominally at the Lion d'Or, but in reality he was not to be found there, being engaged with all the historical monuments of Saint Aubin. The whole of that afternoon Edward Graham followed him in vain. He could never succeed in overtaking him. He had sent a pressing message to Monsieur Merle to come at once, but the builder was not at home; he was ten leagues off, said his wife, and could not be at Saint Aubin before the next morning. This was unfortunate. And Mr. Graham had no one to consult, no one who could advise him in this cruel emergency. He thought of Lily Scot, indeed, whose prudence and discretion he had entire faith in, but, unwilling to discuss this matter in the presence of Mrs. Scot and her daughters, he wrote a few lines to his betrothed, asking her to let him speak to her alone that evening. The day was already well worn, and, having confided the note to Sarah Webster, he waited for the appointed hour as patiently as he could. He did not feel sanguine. He looked forward to the worst. The inspector had either been prejudiced against him, or he wanted to make a job for a friend out of Mr. Bertram's house, or he was in good faith, but that Edward Graham was loath to admit. He felt sure of the solidity of the building—so sure that only the grossest ignorance, he was certain, could explain this terrible mistake. And yet that ignorance in which he did not believe was his only chance. If he could convince the inspector that he was mistaken, he, Edward Graham, was saved; if he could not, he was ruined.

Mrs. Scot, who knew nothing, Lily having remained discreetly silent, and prevented Miss Bertram from giving Louisa and Jane information—Mrs. Scot, we say, was taking her usual nap when Sarah Webster admitted Edward Graham that evening, and said, significantly:

"Miss Lily's in the garden, sir."

Lily was in the garden and alone. The air was chill; she had tied her handkerchief on her head, and Edward Gra-

ham saw that she was pale and looked troubled. At once his courage rose, and he cheered her.

"My darling," said he, passing her slender arm within his own strong one, "you must not be cast down. I shall prevail over them all, depend upon it."

A sigh was Lily's answer. She tried to smile, but could not. For many days she had been striving in vain against the conviction that her life was to be one of disappointment, but now that conviction was very strong. As that gray garden in the evening light of a cloudy and starless sky, so seemed her young life darkened in its early promise, but with no hope of sunshine for the morrow.

"You must not be depressed, my dear girl," said Edward Graham, still bent on being hopeful. "I have sent for Merle; I shall call with him to-morrow on the inspector, and, if reason can convince a man, he shall be convinced."

Lily raised her gentle, dark eyes to his with a very wistful look.

"My dear Edward," she said, sadly, "the inspector is gone."

Then, indeed, the blow fell on the young architect, and he felt that he had been tried unheard, and sentenced without hope of appeal. He felt it, yet rebelled against the conviction.

"It is impossible!" he said, passionately. Then, in a low tone, drawing his arm from Lily's, as if thus acknowledging that he could no longer be her stay against sorrow, he added, with a groan: "Lily, I am a ruined man!"

She laid her two hands on his arm, and looked tenderly up in his face.

"Do not give way," she said, soothingly. "It is a cruel blow, but it is not ruin. Mr. Bertram says that, since there is a defect in the building, the loss must fall on the builder, who—"

"On the builder!" interrupted Edward Graham, almost angrily; "and, do you think, Lily, I would let an innocent man suffer for my misfortune? A defect in the building! There is none. That inspector is ignorant or dishonest, or he would not dare to say so."

"But it must be taken down," said Lily, with her troubled look. "You cannot bear all the loss."

He was silent awhile. It was almost more than he could

bear to hear her speak so of his work. He wanted the passionate indignation of Miss Bertram, not that sad, grave view of his loss or gain, the only one which Lily Scot seemed able to take. He wronged her in the bitterness of his heart. She felt for his humbled pride and his disappointed ambition, as well as for his falling fortunes.

"Mr. Bertram will surely not shrink from his responsibility," he said, at last.

"Who knows?" sadly answered Lily. "If he believes that there is a fault in the building, he may not think himself bound to you. Besides, his means are limited. He has only an annuity, which dies with him. Lily Bertram is rich, but Lily Bertram's money is in Mr. Lennard's hands."

"Lily, Lily," said her lover, with a sort of despair, "have you no comfort to give me?"

"Oh, that I had—that I had!" she answered, the tears rushing to her eyes; "but it is my misfortune, not my fault, that I see things too much as they are, not as I could wish them to be."

Mr. Graham walked up and down the path, his hands clinched, his lips compressed, his blood boiling with indignation, his heart overflowing with sorrow. Never in all his life had his manliness found it harder to repress the manifestation of grief than in that sad hour. He could have stormed and cried like a boy at the injustice and hardship of his lot. Spite the premature gravity of his aspect, the troubles of life were new to him. Seriousness is not experience, and that stern teacher had hitherto passed him by, and poured her lessons into other ears than his. He rebelled—with all his heart he rebelled against her, and would have flung back, if he could, a defiance in her face. It was so unjust, so hard, so unmerited. Why should he have to suffer for Mr. Lennard's revenge, for the inspector's folly or dishonesty—why, indeed? And yet he felt even then that illusion was useless and foolish, that his doom was decreed, and submission his only lot.

"I will make an effort," he said, turning to Lily, "but I have no hope. Good-night, my dear girl; you must excuse me to Mrs. Scot—I must go home and write a letter."

Lily was too much depressed to reply. She walked by his side till they reached the end of the garden, and when there he stood still, and, taking her in his arms, he kissed her,

and uttered a sad good-night. Tears were her only answer. It was all over—she felt it then; the rest was but the bitter lingering over what was the inevitable end.

Swiftly and almost angrily Mr. Graham walked home in the cloudy light of the spring evening. He had a letter to write; he would write it. It might avail nothing, but those men in office should know something of his mind—he would not fall without making a manful effort to win the day; besides, he would appeal to the law—he would, though he should thereby only sink the deeper. He would spend his last shilling—he would—

"Monsieur Merle is waiting for monsieur," said a maid whom he met on the threshold of the Cité de Jérusalem, and who here interrupted his bitter reverie.

"Thank Heaven!" said Edward Graham, springing up the dark stairs. "He will help me to fight it out—he is a man."

Edward Graham found the builder waiting for him in his room. As he saw him sitting there, he remembered with a pang how he had seen him for the first time in that very room, in that very chair, eight months before, sitting thus waiting for him, and with his thin hair stirred by the night air coming in through the open window. The remembrance of that evening, when he stood unconscious on the brink of his fate, suddenly sobered the young man.

"Well, Monsieur Merle," he said, quietly, "I see you get my message."

Monsieur Merle shook his head.

"I did not get your message, monsieur," said he, giving him a doubtful look, and coughing as he moved on his chair, "but Maître Louis Renaud, the carpenter, came down my way, and he told me an inspector had come to Saint Aubin, and that—it seems like a dream—that he objected to the turret, and was going to get it pulled down."

"He does not find it steady," answered Edward Graham, laconically, and sitting down as he spoke. "What do you say to that, Monsieur Merle?" and he laughed, and looked at his visitor with a scorn that was not meant for him.

The man's simple and honest face flushed to the roots of his thin hair. His blue eyes lit, and he struck a blow on the table by his side.

"Maître Louis Renaud said it," he cried, "and I could not believe it, and it is false, monsieur—as I am a man, it is

false. I followed out your instructions to the letter, monsieur. I put it to you, did I not?"

"You did," answered Edward Graham, holding out his hand to him across the table. "As I am a man, the blame, if blame there be, is mine. And, Monsieur Merle," he added, after a brief pause, "no matter how all this ends, I will never put the blame on you."

"I knew it," said Monsieur Merle, excitedly. "I knew you were brave," he added, using the word in its old provincial meaning, of honesty. "I said so to Maître Louis Renaud, when he came to me in such a fright. But, Monsieur Gram," continued the builder, "is it possible that they will do such an abominable thing as to pull down that turret?"

"How do I know?—how can I tell?" replied Edward Graham, with some bitterness. "I am a foreigner, you are a native, and you and not I should know what there is to fear."

"I never had such a case," replied Monsieur Merle, with a perplexed look, "but—but people in power do not care much for people's pockets. Can you do nothing, Monsieur Gram? Have you no friends to help you?"

"I have one strong enemy against me, and my good right for me, and that is how I stand, Monsieur Merle."

The builder's face fell; then, with a heavy sigh, he asked monsieur to tell him all that had taken place. There is a bitter pleasure in the recapitulation of our woes, and Edward Graham's narrative was prolix enough. Monsieur Merle heard him with a troubled look.

"I am afraid, Monsieur Gram," he said, when the young architect was silent—"I am afraid. The inspector must be a fool or a rogue, and I had almost rather he were a rogue than a fool, for you can convince a rogue, but a fool never, never, Monsieur Gram. And I think, I do, that it is that Laurent's doing. He has always said the turret was too bare. Has he been hoping for a job? I must pay him all the same, for there is a contract, and he knows it, and if he has no conscience I have one, and also a good name, to which I hold, and he knows it."

Edward Graham bent his shrewd, keen look on the man's troubled countenance.

"Let us look the worst in the face," said he, "let us say that the inspector's decree is passed, that the turret must fall —what then?"

The builder rose to his feet with an ashy face.

"Monsieur," said he, with a scared look, "I have gone into this in good faith; the bread of my children is in it, my honor is in it. The turret was to be finished by the thirtieth of June, and by the first of July I have heavy bills, fifty thousand francs and more, to pay."

"And by the first of July I shall owe you forty thousand francs, that is your meaning, is it not, Monsieur Merle?"

"Monsieur Gram, you know what our bargain was. I am not and do not wish to be a harsh creditor, but you say yourself that I am not to blame, and you know what our bargain was."

"I do," answered Edward Graham, in a steady voice; "and, let what may come to pass, you shall not lose, Monsieur Merle."

The builder looked at him; he read truth and honesty in his face; he breathed a deep, relieved sigh, and uttered a low but earnest "Thank God!" which showed how deep and strong his fear had been.

And so, much relieved, the builder left Edward Graham, and, as the young man listened to his retreating step, he felt strangely forsaken and alone. No hopeful illusions beguiled the bitterness of that hour. The trap into which he had fallen was all the clearer for having been hidden so long. The same cruel hand which had bided its revenge with Mr. Bertram had also known how to bide its time with Mr. Graham's turret. The hatred was not for him, but he was none the less the victim of it, and so he looked his future in the face sadly, but, as he said to himself, with some pride, like a man.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE last act of the dramas of real life is not always like that of a drama played out on the stage. It does not follow those laws of ever-culminating interest which prevail in man's conception of man's misfortunes. The real tragedy often opens instead of ending with the catastrophe; and its termination is apt to be flat and dull. There certainly was

no comparison between the severity of the blow which had fallen so suddenly on Edward Graham and the long, weary unfolding of the trouble which now embittered his life.

His first act was to bid Monsieur Merle dismiss the workmen. They went their way; the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold became silent once more, and the young architect brooded over his wrongs in the Cité de Jérusalem. His next step was to write to the inspector, and make a long, earnest, and passionate appeal for justice; and third, and alas! most trying task, he faced Saint Aubin. To his indignation he found that this little world, which he had not injured, but to which he had not perhaps paid sufficient homage, was unanimous in condemnation. If Saint Aubin had been builder, architect, mason, carpenter, it could not have been surer than it was that Mr. Graham and his turret were both all wrong.

Monsieur Duhamel and Monsieur Gentil, who agreed about nothing else, kindly agreed in pooh-poohing Edward Graham and his ill-fated turret. Mr. Lennard eagerly took up the tale. "The man never was an architect," he said, contemptuously; and, shut out of society though he was, he could utter the words in open and public places, where they found many an echo. So it was agreed that Mr. Graham had never been an architect, that he had all but ruined Mr. Bertram's beautiful house, and that it was a mercy the inspector had come in time to save that interesting relic of antiquity from destruction. And of this Mr. Graham heard enough to feel a resentment all the deeper that he scorned to show it.

Several days had passed thus when, as he was walking up the street on his way to Mr. Bertram's, Edward Graham met Mrs. Petherick coming out of Mrs. Scot's door.

"O Mr. Graham!" she cried, "I am in such a rage! I have just been and told Mrs. Scot. I should have died, I think, if I had not told her. She was very angry, of course, though not half so much as I am; but, then, she is such a sweet-tempered woman; and you always were an immense favorite of mine, Mr. Graham," added Mrs. Petherick, nodding at the young architect, and seeming unmindful of the stern gravity of his aspect. "I dare say that is why the odious captain is so bitter against you. And now, what do you think he called your beautiful turret not an hour ago in the reading-room?—

he called it the tower of Pisa, Mr. Graham. So absurd, you know, because your turret is beautifully straight. The tower of Pisa! Oh! I am so angry!"

"I am very much obliged to you," said Edward Graham, grimly; "and especially for telling Mrs. Scot. Good-morning, Mrs. Petherick." And with his haughtiest bow he left her.

"The tower of Pisa!" thought he, burning with resentment, not at Captain Jekyll's poor insolence, but at all that had caused it. He pushed open Mr. Bertram's gate and entered the court of Mr. Bertram's house, and looked up, oh! how bitterly, at the unfinished turret before him. Old Marie's white cap appeared at a ground-floor window, then vanished, then, after a while, the woman came out to him, and said, doubtfully:

"Monsieur Bertram is going out, but he will be happy to see monsieur for a few minutes."

"Of course, he is going out," thought Edward Graham. "He was in the country all these days, and now he is going out."

Mr. Bertram was alone. He was standing, in silent protest against a long visit; and, indeed, the moment that Edward Graham entered the dining-room, and that his eyes met Mr. Bertram's, the young man felt that that calm, handsome face before him was neither open nor friendly.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Graham," said Mr. Bertram, with a cold shake of the hand. "I hope you bring good news of that vexatious business. It is most vexatious," he added, shaking his head solemnly. "I am more concerned than I can say."

"I have just got a letter from the inspector," answered Mr. Graham.

"Ah! indeed; and what does he say?"

"That the turret cannot remain."

"Very unfortunate," said Mr. Bertram, who did not look much surprised. "Such heavy loss," he murmured, rubbing his smooth chin—Mr. Bertram wore no beard.

"This is not the speech of a man who is going to pay me," thought Edward Graham.

"It is such heavy loss," resumed Mr. Bertram; "but, of course," he remarked, meditatively, "Merle, the builder, will make the most of the stone and all that."

Mr. Graham was silent, but, though he did not know it, he looked very sternly at Mr. Bertram, who continued, with undisturbed equanimity:

"If sympathy for such a misfortune can lighten your trouble, Mr. Graham, you have mine—yes," he added, in the emphatic tone of a man who is making a liberal donation—"you have mine."

Edward Graham felt that he must come to the point.

"Mr. Bertram," said he, "when I began this work at your wish, we entered into an agreement by which you bound yourself to pay me the sum of thirty thousand francs—"

"Mr. Graham," interrupted Mr. Bertram, with an alarmed start, "you cannot be serious—you cannot mean that *I* am to be the sufferer in this unfortunate matter?"

"I mean, sir, that ten days ago you assured me, on the honor of a Bertram—"

"Of course, I did," again interrupted Mr. Bertram, "but I never contemplated, then, that the turret was actually to be destroyed, pulled down, leveled to the ground. Mr. Graham," said he, laying his white hand on the young man's arm, and looking down at him with his serene blue eyes, "I put it to you—can I, can any man be expected to pay for unsound work?"

"Do you believe it to be unsound?" asked Edward Graham, whose dark eyes burned with ill-repressed resentment.

"I must believe it," calmly answered Mr. Bertram. "I must believe what competent judges have declared to be true."

"It is not!" said the young man, angrily; "the work is not unsound work, but work good and true."

"Mr. Graham, allow me; these are mere words. Since you will dwell on this painful theme, not of my own seeking, you will allow, let me remind you, that you have not communicated to me the inspector's letter."

"And you think I am afraid to do so?" indignantly answered Mr. Graham, and he threw, rather than put, the letter on the table which divided him from Mr. Bertram.

The inspector's letter, which Mr. Bertram read aloud in a clear, even voice, ran thus:

"MONSIEUR:

"I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your let-

ter, dated the 17th ultimo. Allow me to inform you that you labor under a misconception. Your employers, knowing that the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold was under the control of the state, may or may not, according to the terms of the agreement, be answerable to you for the consequences of such a state of things. But there are matters into which the commission cannot possibly enter. With regard to the solidity of the turret, and the opinions I expressed upon its incongruous appearance, I simply persist in what I have already said; but, at the same time, I beg to decline all argument upon the subject, being answerable to the commission only for those opinions. I beg, monsieur, that you will accept the assurance of my distinguished consideration."

Then followed the official signature, which was officially illegible.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bertram, putting down the letter, and looking at Mr. Graham in calm rebuke, "this is plain enough. Your unfortunate turret is not solid. I am sorry for you, but allow me to ask what *I* have to do with architectural mistakes?"

He stood before Mr. Graham with his hand on his heart, calm, dignified—a Bertram from head to foot. Mr. Graham, too, stood, and he confronted Mr. Bertram with a contempt as calm as that gentleman's dignity.

"The inspector's assertions are those of one man," said he; "the turret is there—let it be tested by experts. I am willing to abide by their opinion. Moreover, sir, there is a passage in that letter which you ignore: that Mr. Lennard and you, knowing this house to be under the control of the state, are answerable to me for the loss with which I am threatened."

"If this be a threat," said Mr. Bertram, with an indignant laugh, "I put it by, sir, so," and he waved his white hand and flashed his diamond ring at Edward Graham. "You may try the law if you please, but I warn you that it will go against you. I am not answerable for facts of which I was ignorant, nor responsible for the payment of work that is flagrantly unsound."

Edward Graham scorned to argue. Whichever way Mr. Bertram steered meant ruin for him; then what mattered a

little money, more or less, when all must go? "I must outlive it either way," thought he; "let me, then, be a man, and bear my ill-fortune with a man's pride."

"Mr. Bertram," said he, drawing himself up to his full height, "I am the victim of foul injustice, and you know it; my work is sound and true, and you know it—I leave you to your conscience."

"Sir," cried Mr. Bertram, coloring a little, and starting with a mixture of confusion and anger, "what do you mean?"

"What I say."

"If you mean that you will appeal to the law—"

"I leave you to your conscience," again said Mr. Graham, "and to that higher law which is as far above that of this world as heaven is above earth. Good-morning, Mr. Bertram."

He walked out of the house, more indignant than disheartened, and receiving one of those early lessons on the reliance which inexperienced men must place on fair words.

In the same house where the *juge de paix* sat in his dark room, Monsieur Lavis, the *avoué*, had set up his *étude*, or rather the great-grandfather of Monsieur Lavis had set it up three generations ago. Monsieur Lavis was a lawyer—a rich one, a keen one, and an old one. He was the ablest man of his profession in Saint Aubin, and to him Edward Graham had applied for advice in the very beginning of his present trouble. He had explained his case candidly and clearly, but with all the inevitable prolixity of a man who has got a wrong. Little, bald-headed Monsieur Lavis had not much to do just then, and he had listened patiently, with his head thrown back, his mouth open, and his eyes half shut. When Edward Graham's account of all that had passed was ended, the young man could not help adding, a little impatiently: "I do not know if I have made myself understood."

"Perfectly," said Monsieur Lavis. "I always shut my eyes to concentrate thought. Well, my young friend, all I have to say is this: Write to the inspector, and, when you receive his answer, bring it to me."

Edward Graham had written, and, when the answer had come, he had taken it to Monsieur Lavis.

"Ah! so," said Monsieur Lavis, looking rapidly over it—"well, suppose you follow the advice of that good gentleman

with the unreadable name, apply to Messieurs Bertram and Lennard, and ask them to pay you."

"Mr. Bertram I will see on that matter—with Mr. Lennard I will have no personal dealings," was the young man's indignant answer.

"Ah!" said Monsieur Lavis, placably—"well, when you have seen Monsieur Bertram, you can come and tell me what he says." What Mr. Bertram said we know, and now we can follow Edward Graham up the dark stairs of the old house, we can ring with him at the dingy door of the *étude*, and with him, too, we can enter the presence of Monsieur Lavis.

The *avoué* looked up from his desk, waved his visitor to a chair, and waited. At once Edward Graham gave him a clear and rapid account of his interview with Mr. Bertram.

"Well," said Monsieur Lavis, in a low, confidential tone, "Monsieur Bertram, with such a loop-hole as that of want of solidity in the turret, could scarcely act otherwise. It really was not to be expected," he complacently added, and evidently viewing the case from a legal and professional point of view.

Mr. Graham bit his lip, but it was quietly enough that he remarked:

"Pray, then, how am I to deal with Messrs. Bertram and Lennard?"

"If I understood you rightly the other day," said Monsieur Lavis, "your first wish was to get clear of Monsieur Merle, the builder."

"Just so."

"Well, then, settle with him—*à l'aimable*, of course. He has the name of an honest man. I dare say he will allow you as much for your turret as it is worth. When you have ascertained what your real loss is, you can make another attempt with Messieurs Bertram and Lennard—"

"Never!" interrupted the young man—"never will I appeal to either, unless through the law."

"Oh!" quietly said Monsieur Lavis, "the law! Well, then, you can try the law, as you say."

"But how—but when, and with what result?" asked Edward Graham, impetuously.

"My dear monsieur, how do I know?" was the composed answer. "There will be the usual delays, of course;

but, of course, too, much will depend upon the experts who will be appointed to look into the turret, and—"

"I am not afraid," cried Edward Graham, vehemently. "I would stake a fortune—I would stake my life upon its soundness!"

"Of course you would," placably said Monsieur Lavis; "but unfortunately your fate lies in the hands of men who may differ with you in these matters. Now, suppose, for instance, that Messieurs Gentil and Duhamel were the experts, they would go against you; and, as it seems the turret must be destroyed *quand même*, time will not show who is right and who is wrong in this matter, and—"

Edward Graham started to his feet with a vehemence that nearly threw down his chair.

"Is there, then, no law, no justice?" he cried, the veins in his forehead swelling, and his dark eyes flashing fire. "Am I to be the victim of a quarrel with which I had nothing to do—of that base revenge which would ruin one man that another may be hurt—of that mean avarice which would rob labor of its wages? Am I to be defrauded in honor and in substance because of the ignorance of government officials, and the envy of rival practitioners? Are these shores as cruel and as savage to the stranger as they were when they reared false beacons and lived upon the foul plunder of the sea?"

He spoke with the passionate and unconscious eloquence that springs from the sense of a great wrong; he spoke, too, with that eloquence of look, voice, and manner, which seems inherent to some races, and which, though he so rarely showed it, was the gift of his Italian blood. "That young man has missed his vocation," thought the lawyer, admiringly; "he was meant for the bar; he has the look, the action, the voice, the passion—good, very good!"

"Well?" impatiently said Edward Graham.

"Well," composedly said Monsieur Lavis, "allow me a plain question. Lawsuits are doubtful matters—I suppose you know that. How much are you willing to risk on this lawsuit?"

The question fell like ice on a raging flame. How much would he risk? That was to say, how much of his little all would there be left for him to risk when he had settled with Monsieur Merle? "Do you mean to say," he retorted, "*that I am* not sure to win?"

Monsieur Lavis stared.

"Sure to win!" he echoed—"have I not implied that the experts may go against you; and, if they do, how can you expect to get a sou from Messieurs Bertram and Lennard?"

Edward Graham bit his lip.

"Thank you, Monsieur Lavis," he said, bitterly; "I understand—you are afraid I should not be able to pay you. Well, I shall either give you ample security, or relinquish the matter. Good-morning," and he walked out erect and indignant, but with new bitterness at his heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"My poor old auntie, you little knew what you were doing when you lured me to Saint Aubin!" thought Edward Graham, as he stood in the street and cast a desolate look around him. The old town had lost none of its picturesque attractions; it still had those dark, dingy houses, quaintly carved, which the Middle Ages had bequeathed to the nineteenth century, but its charm was gone for Edward Graham. This little stronghold of Norman art had been very fatal to him, and his eye could love it no more. Heart-sick and weary, he took a dark street that led to the quay, and thence to the shore, and on that pebbly beach, in the shadow of those tall, white cliffs, to the sound of those rolling waves, that had all seen the first downward turning of his fate on the day of Mrs. Scot's acknowledged ruin, he tried to think his case over and look his future in the face.

He found it hard, very hard, indeed. He was twenty-six, he was ambitious, he was very much in love, and he saw that he must leave Saint Aubin with the stigma of a failure upon him, give up the girl he was fond of, and go back to England so poor a man that he might almost call himself penniless. Mr. Graham had a hundred a year, but his capital was small. It had been invested by the distant cousin who left him that income in foreign funds, which gave high interest. If he sold out, as he must, in order to pay the

builder, but very little would be left to him. Should he venture that little in a doubtful lawsuit? Would that little suffice? Cruel question! He was clear-sighted enough to perceive that Monsieur Lavis thought badly of his case, and would have nothing to do with it. The man was old, selfish, and rich, but, though he wanted neither work nor money, he was keen, and, if he had been sure that Edward Graham must prevail over his enemies, would he have spoken as he had spoken? "No, ten times no!" thought the young man; "but he sees that, as a foreigner, I shall be made the scapegoat, and he has no wish to follow me into the desert. Another practitioner may be less wary and less cautious—but what then? Shall I rush headlong into ruin, and mayhap disgrace, for the chance of retrieving what a keen lawyer thinks irretrievable? And yet to yield—to give in to such foul wrong—shall I do that?"

Truly, the battle was a hard one; but some men understand, even in youth, the wisdom of submitting to defeat. In his heart Edward Graham felt and knew that he was beaten; he might prolong the contest, but he could only render its end more fatal. He chafed under the bitter certainty, but he could not remove it; his clear mind, his calm judgment, both told him that he had been worsted. His turret was to be destroyed—that neither he nor any one could help; but it had also been pronounced defective, and, do what he would, opinion would always go against him, and side with that falsehood. He might proclaim his wrong, but who would believe him? That white and mute witness of his skill, to which he might have appealed, would be gone; that hope and pride of his young manhood was to perish, and all the fond dreams and happy illusions he had indulged in during its progress were to be buried under its ruins, deeper and farther from the light of day than its foundations had ever been laid in the bosom of the earth.

The afternoon and more did Edward Graham spend in this bitter meditation, walking up and down the lonely shore, taking counsel from those silent friends, sea and sky, which God has given to man to soothe him in those sad hours when the very speech of his fellow-man is more than he can bear. When he went back at last to the Cité de Jérusalem, he found Mr. Cowper lounging up and down the dark street, and evidently waiting for him. No sight could be more unwel-

come to Mr. Graham than that of this man's pleasant face, but he was quick to guess that some matter connected with his present trouble had brought him, and his greeting, though it could not be friendly, was at least courteous. Mr. Cowper was, as usual, airy and cheerful.

"What a delightful old nest you live in!" said he. "Hearing something of what was going on, I thought I would have a chat with you. Shall we walk down the quay, or go up to your room?"

"We will go up to my room, if you please," was the young architect's grave answer.

He would have died just then rather than be seen by the eyes of Saint Aubin lounging about on the quay with Mr. Lennard's nephew.

"As you please," kindly said Mr. Cowper, and he followed Edward Graham up the dark stairs and into his room, which the light of the setting sun was filling with its fiery glow. "A really charming old place," said Mr. Cowper, at once taking one of the Louis XV. chairs, and stretching himself out in indolent enjoyment—"much better than that in Chelsea, I should say. By-the-by, my dear fellow, what do you mean?—excuse my interference, but what do you mean by all this?"

"By all what?" asked Edward Graham, sitting down. He spoke calmly, but his tone was cold and clear—the tone of a man whose mood will admit of no trifling.

"Well, now, look here," said Mr. Cowper, bending forward and speaking confidentially; "why not make the best of a bad bargain? Very unpleasant, and all that, I know, but why make the worst of it?"

Mr. Graham seemed to meditate; then he asked Mr. Cowper what he would have him do.

"I would have you not be your own enemy," was the prompt reply; "I would have you wait. Where is the use of going to law?"

"I shall not go to law. You may tell Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram as much."

Mr. Cowper looked surprised, and also rather puzzled. He evidently wanted to know more than this.

"Quite right," he murmured, with an approving nod—"quite sensible, too. One never knows what time may bring forth."

"But I do," said Mr. Graham, with sudden sternness; "and, since you came to know it, I can tell you what time will bring forth in this matter. I am going to pay the builder, and to have the turret pulled down."

"My dear boy," cried Mr. Cowper, with a start, "you cannot be serious."

"I never was more so."

"But, pray, do not be precipitate—pray, do not. I am sure," and he laid strong emphasis on the word—"I am sure both my uncle and Mr. Bertram merely wish to see how the case lies in order to settle with you; but in the mean while the turret must stand, of course."

"It shall fall!" said Edward Graham, somewhat vindictively. "Of course, they wish for delay; of course, they wish the turret to stand—shall I tell you why, Dick Cowper?" The old familiar name escaped him in the excitement of the moment. "Mr. Lennard wants to ruin me all the more surely by making that turret fall at the bidding of the law, and with the disgrace of its condemnation clinging to me forever. Mr. Bertram has other motives. He thinks that, perhaps, the turret may not be doomed, after all, but that, if I get heart-sick and weary, he may get it cheap out of me; but you may tell them, since they sent you to know, that they have driven me to bay, and that I would rather pull down that turret stone by stone with my own hands than let it stand one hour at their pleasure."

The southern vehemence with which he spoke struck Mr. Cowper as it had struck Monsieur Lavis.

"On my word," said he, admiringly, "I should be the architect, and you should be the barrister, Graham. You were cut out for it. Now, don't look exasperated, man—I speak in sober earnest. There, there, we will say no more on that head; but, with regard to the pulling down of the turret, remember that it is on little Lily Bertram's land, and that both Mr. Lennard and Mr. Bertram may prevent you from—"

"Let them, if they dare!" interrupted Edward Graham. "The turret is mine, or it is theirs. If it be theirs, let them prove it by paying me; if they refuse to do so, it is mine, and I will do what I like with my own. I will spend the last shilling I have," he added, stamping his foot on the floor, "before they shall rob me doubly. Well," said he, turning

almost fiercely on his visitor, "what have you got to say to that? Will they pay, or will they not?"

Mr. Cowper shook his head.

"My dear boy," he answered, soothingly, "my uncle and Mr. Bertram are bent on conciliation, but money in the present state of things is out of the question."

"Listen," said Edward Graham, suddenly calming down; "one concession I will make. Let them settle with the builder, and I will suspend my claim upon them until the fate of the turret is known. Nay," he added, with a bitter laugh, "I will do more. I will hold them free if they will settle with Merle, and pay the man his just debt."

Mr. Cowper shook his head again.

"I can transmit your proposal," said he, "but—"

"Do not," interrupted Edward Graham, with a scornful gesture; "you were sent here to know, and, if possible, to weaken my purpose, but for nothing else. These two men, who hate each other so mortally, have combined against me, and are bent on my ruin. For a time, at least, they will succeed; but, as to the turret, you know its fate, and what you know you may tell. Let them oppose me, if they dare! Destroyed it shall be, and the act shall be mine, not theirs. The turret shall fall because they are robbing me, and that I will have the value of the stone, if I have nothing else. Do not tell me that it stands on their land, and that I cannot touch it. If it be so, I shall be glad, for my case will be so clear that I must go to law, no matter what the cost may be —no matter whom I drag down with me if I fall."

"A dangerous man," thought Mr. Cowper, watching his flashing eyes and quivering lips, "and just the one to do what he says, too. Well, well," he remarked aloud, in a deprecating voice, "yours is a very hard case, I must say, and I do not wonder that you are a wee bit put out; but is it so very uncertain that this unlucky turret is doomed—that the inspector cannot be made to think otherwise—in short, that matters cannot be mended?"

"Is it certain that Messrs. Lennard and Bertram have refused to acknowledge my debt?" asked Edward Graham. "That is the only question between us. Let the inspector and his verdict stand for what they are worth."

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It was evident that, unless on the question of money, he would not speak; and, as on that question Mr. Cowper could

not enter, he thought it prudent to utter an amiable, "Just so," and to rise and take his leave.

Edward Graham had the healthy appetite of a young man in his prime, but this evening, when he sat down to his solitary dinner in the *salle* on the ground-floor of the Cité de Jérusalem, he could not eat. The day had been a hard one, but its bitterest hour lay before him yet. He had to see Lily Scot, and to tell her his defeat.

Ever since misfortune had first threatened him, it had been a trial to the young man to enter Mrs. Scot's house. Mrs. Scot had been quick to perceive that her daughter's prospects of marriage with Edward Graham were probably over, and, though she was not aware of it, the doubt had lowered him greatly in her opinion. Sarah Webster, who had not looked with much favor on the young architect since Mrs. Scot's losses, helped to strengthen the impression of his incapacity in the lady's mind. "Mr. Graham was very clever, of course," artfully said the nurse; "but, from what that Laurent said, she fancied that the turet was not much in his way. It stood to reason that every gentleman had a way of his own in those things, and Laurent said—"

"I wish you would not talk such nonsense," interrupted Mrs. Scot, pettishly. "Of course, Mr. Graham is very clever, and who cares for what that Laurent says?"

"So I say, ma'am," promptly rejoined nurse—"of course, Mr. Graham is clever."

But Laurent's verdict, which had told with her, told also with her mistress. The clever, idle, good-for-nothing fellow seemed to have staid in Saint Aubin, lounging about the *cafés* only to injure Mr. Graham, and every word he said was somehow or other known, commented upon, and repeated; and, though Mrs. Scot was very angry with Mr. Lennard, and thought the inspector a meddlesome fellow, she felt by no means sure that Mr. Graham was right, and Mr. Graham was too keen and too sensitive not to see and resent her doubt of his skill. And yet even this could have been borne if Lily Scot—his Lily—had been more sanguine and hopeful. But, though she was sweetness itself when they met—though her sympathy with his anxiety was entire, and her sense of his trouble was deep—no passionate, indignant protest ever fell from her lips; no womanly, vehement, and unreasonable certainty that he was right, and that everybody

else was wrong, ever appeared in her looks. This, too, Mr. Graham had seen and felt to the heart's core, and so to go this evening to Mrs. Scot's house, and to face that lady and her daughter, and tell them both that it was all over, was very hard indeed.

The moment she opened the door and let him in, Sarah Webster read the truth in his face, and her own gypsy face darkened again as she gave him a stealthy look.

"Yes, sir," said she, showing him into the drawing-room, "the ladies are all there. Miss Scot's head is bad, poor dear, but she has not gone to her room yet."

This hint that he had better not stay too long fell unheeded on the young man's ear. His heart was sick, his cheeks were colorless, his very lips were white, as he entered the room. Mrs. Scot, who was lying on the sofa, sat up to welcome him, and he did not see her. Jane and Louisa made way for him as he walked toward their sister, and he did not see them; he only saw the sweet, pale face, the wistful, dark eyes, the gentle smile of welcome, and from the depths of his full heart he cried, as he took her hand:

"Lily, it is all over!"

Lily hung her head, and did not speak.

"The will of God be done," she said, at last; then, with a heavy, sorrowful sigh, she sat down, and Mr. Graham, still holding her hand within his own, sat down by her with his look fastened on her face.

"What is all over?" asked Mrs. Scot, a little stiffly. "You come in like a ghost, Mr. Graham, and you speak in riddles."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Scot," said he, with a dreary sigh—"what I meant was, that the inspector has written, the turret is doomed, Mr. Bertram refuses to pay me, and I shall have to sell out the capital of my income to pay the builder."

"Well, Mr. Graham, if you will do that," cried Mrs. Scot, in great indignation, "what can be expected?"

Mr. Graham did not heed her; he was looking his last on the face he loved.

"So absurd!" continued Mrs. Scot.

"Absurd!" echoed the young man, with something like a frown—"what else would you have me do, Mrs. Scot?"

"Keep your money, of course," was that lady's intrepid reply. "How can you pay people, if people will not pay you?"

Edward Graham did not choose to argue the point; he looked at Lily, but her eyes were downcast.

"Of course, it is throwing every chance away," pursued Mrs. Scot, triumphing in her logic. "What can you expect if you will sell out to pay that builder?"

"True," answered Edward Graham; "I can expect nothing, nor do I, Mrs. Scot—nothing."

"Well, Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Scot, whom his calmness only exasperated, "you must allow me to say that my daughter is very ill used, and—" but here Mrs. Scot's wrath melted into sorrow, and she burst into tears. Louisa and Jane at once began to sob, and Lily, looking in her lover's face, allowed two pearly drops to flow down her cheeks.

"My poor Lily!" he fondly said; "you deserved a better fate."

"I shall never blame you," answered Lily, very gently, but acquiescing without demur in what she had long foreseen.

Mr. Graham rose; he was stung, though he did not know it, to be so readily excused and forgiven, and, so to speak, dropped out of the life that was to have been mingled with his.

"Mrs. Scot," said he, turning to that lady, "your sense of your dear daughter's wrong cannot be greater than is mine; but do me the justice to say that I have been honest, and that I am the greater sufferer of the two. It will not be hard for her to find a better and a more fortunate man than Edward Graham; but where will he ever find another Lily?—never! never!" said he, in a voice full of sorrow. "And yet in common honesty I cannot, I must not try to keep her. I am, or soon will be, penniless; and I have no name, no position, nothing that would warrant me in asking you to sanction a long engagement. We must part, and I suppose the sooner we do so the better. Good-by, Mrs. Scot—think as kindly of me as you can.—Good-by, Miss Scot. I must not say Lily now—you are mine no more. Good-by; God bless you, and forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," answered Lily, who had risen, and stood very pale before him. "You have been, and still are, the soul of honor. We are parted because you are honorable and true, and cannot be otherwise. God will bless you, Mr. Graham, and I shall always think of you as of a

dear, good friend with whom I could have been very happy—if God had so willed it," she added, with a low, sad sigh.

He did not take her in his arms, he did not kiss her cheek. Caresses were not granted to this last adieu, but he raised her cold hand to his lips and said not a word.

"Mr. Graham, you have behaved nobly!" cried Mrs. Scot, when he turned to her, for consistency was not the good lady's *forte;* "and I shall always say so—always," she added, with a sob.

"Good-by—good-by, Mr. Graham," also sobbed Louisa and Jane.

"Lily," said he, looking at her, wistfully, "it is all over, I believe; but I shall see the inspector before I leave France, and—and, if anything good should turn up, I may come back, may I not?"

Her lips were silent, but her eyes said "Yes." He sighed heavily, and left the room.

Sarah, who had been listening at the key-hole, started back as he came out. Almost at the same moment there was a knock at the gate, and, when the nurse opened it, Miss Bertram, in her white hood, darted in. On seeing Mr. Graham, she uttered a little cry, and, hiding her face in her hands, flew up the old stairs on which he had first seen her. The child felt honest shame, and could not look the wronged man in the face.

"Poor little Lily Bertram!" thought he, as he walked down the street; "may Heaven never visit the sin of your father upon you, for you were true!"

Yes, she had been true, but he soon forgot her. It was all over; it seemed like a bitter dream, but it was a cruel reality, and he knew it and felt it in a strange, hard way. As he went down the street, he passed by a church dedicated to Saint Anne. People were going in for the evening service; he remembered having been there once with Miss Scot—it was her parish church. Now he entered it alone. The wax lights burned dimly on the altar; a few people were scattered on the dark benches; a priest was saying the rosary, and the congregation was answering.

Edward Graham entered the nearest bench. A woman and her child were its only tenants. For some time he listened to her voice, as if it came from some remote shore, with a great sea between that voice and him. This had been

a hard day—the hardest in Edward Graham's life. A day of great wrong, of wrath, and revengeful feelings; a day of cruel suffering, of fair hopes blasted, and honest love wrecked; a day of sorrow, and also a day of sin.

"Our father, who art in heaven," said the priest.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us," answered the woman, and even the little child by her side gabbled through the prayer, as children do.

"Forgive us, as we wish to be forgiven"—precept that seems so easy, and that is so hard! For who would not ask for God's mercy, and who, alas! is willing to extend it? "Can I do that?" the young man thought, and his mind, fastening on that question, forgot all else, till the woman's voice roused him again. The priest had said the Hail Mary, and she had answered: "Pray for us now, and in the hour of our death."

In the hour of our death! Pray for us in that sad hour which is to close the happiest life, and in which we all need prayer so sorely. Pray for us now—that now, which is the very stream of life, which flows in shade or sunshine, which is sometimes so glad, and sometimes, too, so sorrowful. Ay, pray for us now, Mary, in whose merciful arms the Word made flesh so often rested—pray for us, who are all in such sore need of prayer—pray for poor Edward Graham, who has bowed his head in his hands, and, his pride all broken, his hardness all gone, is crying like a child on its mother's breast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE easterly wind was bitterly cold, but Mrs. Graham's cozy English parlor felt warm with the coal fire burning brightly in the grate, and the lamp shedding its mild, clear light in the room. Mrs. Graham sat alone, knitting, and she looked very pleasant and comfortable, till a sudden cloud overspread her open brow. "I wonder if these poor Thompsons have any coals?" thought Mrs. Graham, anxiously. "Perhaps they have not, and the poor wife so delicate, and this such a cold

spring! Now, suppose she should take cold, and have bronchitis, and die, what is to become of all these children—nine of them, and one a baby? Oh! the baby would be sure to die, too," desperately added Mrs. Graham. "As to that, I suppose nothing better could happen it, poor little innocent; and, if the whole of these nine little Thompsons were to die, I can't see—"

Here Mrs. Graham's neat little parlor-maid tapped at the door, and, opening it, said:

"Please, ma'am, here's Mr. Graham," and almost as she spoke Edward Graham came in.

"My goodness!" cried Mrs. Graham, letting her knitting fall in her amazement; "who would have expected you, Ned? And tea is over, too—not that you cannot have some fresh made for you—and whatever does bring you dropping upon me in that fashion? Is the turret finished?"

"Oh, yes!" he answered, with a bitter laugh—"quite finished, auntie;" and, having shaken hands with his aunt, he sat down and stared gloomily at the fire.

"I am so glad!" cried Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, auntie, it is quite finished," he resumed; "and that is why I have come to borrow money from you—can you lend me a hundred pounds?"

"To marry Lily Scot at once!" cried Mrs. Graham, beaming. "Of course I can, my dear boy," she added, rising and going to her bureau. "And when is it to be?" said she, coming back with her check-book in her hand. "What shall I give Lily—a diamond-ring, eh?"

She gave him an inquiring look, which he did not see. He had out of his slender means given Miss Scot a little turquoise ring when they were engaged; and, when he kissed her hand at parting, he had seen that little blue ring on her slender finger. In his heart he had thanked her for not even speaking of returning it, for keeping the gift of the lover when that lost lover must become an unseen friend. With his aunt's question about the diamond-ring, that little ring and the parting both came back.

"Well, we shall see," said Mrs. Graham, rather disappointed; "perhaps Lily herself will tell me what she would like, for I must go and see my goddaughter married," she added, nodding at her gloomy and silent nephew. This was more than Edward Graham could bear.

"Aunt, aunt," he said, turning his head away in the vain attempt not to break down, "it is all over. Miss Scot and I have parted. The turret is demolished, or will be. I am a ruined man; and I tell you honestly, aunt, that you may never see your hundred pounds again."

Mrs. Graham stared at her nephew, and thought, "Is the poor fellow's mind gone? Has the turret been too much for him?" But, if there were signs of grief about Edward Graham, there were none of those tokens which betray a wandering mind. He looked himself even in his heavy sorrow. The conviction that he had been speaking the cruel truth filled Mrs. Graham's mind with dismay.

"My dear boy," said she, "my poor Ned, what do you mean?"

"Every word I say, auntie; but you shall know." And he told her all.

Mr. Graham was not a weak man, and he could bear misfortune; but it was a wonderful relief to him to relate his bitter trouble to one who loved him, who had faith in him, whose indignation rose when she heard his wrong, whose tears flowed at the story of his sorrow. And he told her all, every word, all we know, much that we have not mentioned, as being of small importance; also that interview with the inspector which had sealed his fate, and which he had sought after parting from Lily Scot. It had been decisive. The inspector had adhered to the unfavorable opinion he had formed of the turret, but candidly acknowledged that, whatever its merits might be, the turret was doomed.

"You have certainly fallen in a trap," said he to Edward Graham; "and, in my opinion, you ought to appeal to the law for redress."

"And why don't you?" cried Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling. "Why don't you, Ned? I will bear all the expenses, every shilling, that I will, to see you righted."

"Dear old auntie," said he, taking her hand and shaking it cordially, "of course you would—of course I knew that you would; but would I let you?—never—never! If I had money enough to pay Merle, and to undertake such a lawsuit as that would have been, I would have risked my last shilling rather than submit to such a wrong. But I would not risk your money, still less that poor builder's, and so I have given in, not without a struggle, but entirely. Not one

look behind will I cast, auntie. I am going to begin a new life to-morrow, and to look straight before me—like a man."

He rose, and walked up and down his aunt's parlor in some excitement. He already felt lighter-hearted, ready to begin the hard battle of life over again.

"Ned, you are a fine fellow," cried Mrs. Graham, with a sob; "but oh! the poor turret—to have it pulled down!"

He stood still in the middle of the room, as if a blow had struck him. That first labor of love flashed before him white and fair, as it should have been if men had not been unjust and Fortune unkind. And it was so nearly finished —a few days more, and it would have proclaimed his skill to all. Even Merle, the builder, had all but wept over it as Edward Graham left him his last instructions. "Monsieur, it is murder!" he had said, pathetically. "Is there no hope? Such a beautiful thing, built of such fine stone—must we destroy it with our own hands?"

"It must fall," the young architect had answered, in a stern, hard voice; "and the sooner it falls the better for us both, Monsieur Merle."

And now his aunt, too, said, "Oh, the poor turret!" and to hear her was to go over the old bitterness all over again. He felt he could not bear it.

"Good-night, auntie," said he, with a start. "I have given you my good news, and I must be gone."

In vain Mrs. Graham pressed him to stay; now, that he had relieved his full heart, the young man again wanted solitude. Moreover, Mrs. Graham, though the best and kindest of human beings, had a strange, trying way of probing one's wounds to the quick. Edward Graham knew he could not listen to her; so, taking the check which she thrust in his hand, with a quiet "Thank you, auntie," he left her.

After his fruitless interview with the inspector, Edward Graham had gone and settled with Monsieur Merle at Changy, and thence written to know if he could have his old lodgings in Chelsea once more. The reply had come before his transactions with Monsieur Merle were over. It was favorable; the parlors had been empty seven weeks and three days, as Mrs. Rawlings, the landlady, had ruefully remarked to Charlotte, her maid and counselor—"and a nicer, quieter gentleman than Mr. Graham no one need wish to have." Charlotte echoed the sentiment, and Edward Graham's sad

return to his old home—that return which filled him with so much bitterness — was welcomed by Mrs. Rawlings and Charlotte as a special dispensation of Providence in their favor. So true is the old saying, that it is an ill wind which blows nobody good. To Chelsea Edward Graham had driven on his return—he had merely passed through Saint Aubin without stopping—to Chelsea he now walked, on leaving his aunt. With a weary sigh he entered the dull parlor where no cheerful fire was blazing, and, putting up the check without looking at it, he found out the next day that it was for two hundred pounds, for Mrs. Graham always had a balance at her banker's; he stood and stared moodily before him, looking his new destiny in the face. "You are hard and bitter enough," said he, addressing that invisible enemy; "but with God's help I shall prevail over you yet.—And now I must write to Lily Scot."

He sat down, wrote a line, no more, then went out, and posted the brief missive with his own hands. The night was clear and starry as he walked back; the gas-lights flared in the easterly wind. It was not blowing toward the French shore, but Edward Graham forgot that, and, sending it to the old Norman city, he followed it in its flight. What would she be doing?—how would she feel?—how would she look when his letter was placed in her hands? We require not the wings of the wind to know what Edward Graham never knew.

The day had been a trying one to Mrs. Scot. It so happened that she had been condoled with all day long, and we all know that condolence is sometimes more than one's nerves can bear. Moreover, too much of one thing is apt to be good-for-nothing, and, when evening came, and the infliction was over, Mrs. Scot was rather irritable.

"What is that?" said she, when Sarah came in, and handed Edward Graham's letter to her young mistress.

"I believe it is from Mr. Graham, mamma," said Lily, sadly.

"And what business has Mr. Graham to be writing to you now?" asked Mrs. Scot, in a tone of injured dignity. "I think Mr. Graham has behaved shamefully, and I will not allow any correspondence. What is the use of his writing? What can he say?"

"He does not say much, mamma."

Mrs. Scot, however, was going to utter another indignant protest against Mr. Graham's saying anything, when Jane and Louisa entered the room together, crying, in a breath, "Lily, what is the name of William's ship?"

"The Lady Rose," answered Lily.

"There," said Jane, turning on her sister, "I told you so —Rose, not Rosa.—Well, it seems it has been spoken with at sea. Some one told Lily Bertram, and she has just told us."

"Ah!" said Lily, looking before her like one in a dream, and still holding Edward Graham's letter in her inert hand.

"Well, and what does Mr. Graham say?" asked Mrs. Scot again.

"'Good-by; God forever bless you!'" answered Lily, without looking at the letter.

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Graham sends no message to *me?*" exclaimed Mrs. Scot, evidently affronted.

"He only says that—'Good-by; God forever bless you!'" repeated Lily, almost mechanically.

"Then Mr. Graham is a very uncivil man," said Mrs. Scot, "and I am *very* glad," she emphatically added, "that it is all over."

"Yes, it is all over," said Lily, and she sighed, and folded up Mr. Graham's letter, and took up her work again.

CHAPTER XXV.

Falls that seem as if they should be fatal are not always so, and thus it proved with Edward Graham. Thanks to his aunt's two hundred pounds, thanks to his resolve not to be beaten, and thanks to Sir Edmund Shrievewell, who took up his cause, and helped him to work in a moderate way, he struggled on, and did not sink into those depths out of which a professional man so seldom rises. He was still a poor man, and it seemed as if he might be so all his life; but he could live, and he was not without hopes of paying back his aunt her money some day. She did not wish to have it back —he knew that well, but his pride was in it. Not for worlds

would he have turned the debt into a gift, and thus confessed himself doomed to life-long poverty.

And yet two years, and nearly three, had passed away, and Edward Graham did not seem much nearer to the payment of those two hundred pounds than on that spring evening when he walked home with his aunt's check in his pocket. Many a time hope had deluded him with promises which had melted away into thin air—many a time success had seemed within his reach, and slipped out of his grasp. At last something tangible came—something which might prove a first step on that high-road from which he had been excluded so long. Sir Edmund Shrievewell had gone to the Continent for his health, and before going he had recommended Edward Graham to Mr. Blake, the great commoner and millionaire. Blake House wanted some slight repairs, and Sir Edmund Shrievewell was very sick of Mr. Blake, who was crotchety and ill-tempered, and, if Mr. Blake would take up with that poor, unlucky fellow Graham, and not pester him, Sir Edmund Shrievewell, any more, he, Sir Edmund Shrievewell, would be glad. The young man called upon Mr. Blake at his house in Berkeley Square, and was favorably received. Mr. Blake had the gout just then, and gave him the full history of his malady.

"May be useful to you, sir," said he. "I can see that you will have the gout some day. I am never mistaken. Well, Doctor Sims says I may be up again in a week or so, and, if you are disengaged then, Mr. Graham, we will go down to Blake House together, and see what there is to do to the old place. Very little, I believe. I shall write to you as soon as I can stir; or, perhaps, you will not mind calling on me again, eh?"

Mr. Graham, poor fellow, was most willing to call, and when he did call was very kindly received. Mr. Blake, who was dull just then, asked him to stay to dinner, and was much pleased with his easy manners and his clear and sensible way of explaining professional matters.

"Mr. Graham," said he, as they parted, "it strikes me that you are the very man I wanted all along."

"I hope so," honestly answered Edward Graham, whose dark eyes sparkled.

Dr. Sims had enjoined early hours, as Mr. Blake had told his guest. It was barely nine when they parted, and

not ten yet when Edward Graham reached Chelsea. He let himself in, as usual, with his latch-key, and with more surprise than pleasure he found Mr. Cowper waiting for him in his sitting-room, and lounging indolently in his easy-chair. They had not met since Mr. Graham had left Saint Aubin, and the aspect of Mr. Cowper, which had never been pleasant to him, recalled too vividly the bitterest day in his life to be pleasant now. Involuntarily, his face darkened; involuntarily, too, his welcome was constrained and cold, but Mr. Cowper, always delightfully at his ease, did not or would not see this. He was cordial and airy and cheerful, and gave Mr. Graham time to recover his usual manner, and also to take some note of his guest.

Sure, though subtile, are the signs which show when a man is down in the world. Mr. Cowper was smoking when Edward Graham came in; the smell of his cigar, which was not a choice one, at once struck the young man as significant. He looked at him more keenly. Mr. Cowper was not shabby yet, but he was no longer a well-dressed man. The unpretending luxuriousness of his garments was gone; their texture was no longer fine; their cut was no longer irreproachable. It would be hard to say that he wore a look of care, but calm content no longer sat on Mr. Cowper's brow. Moreover, Mr. Cowper now had a *blasé*, wearied air—an air of half-dissipation, which had been foreign to him formerly. It was as if the man had sunk morally as well as socially, and that either he had flung off restraints which he had acknowledged before, or that the freshness and vigor of youth were gone, and no longer concealed youth's secret sins. Another change, too, there was with which Edward Graham was struck at once—Mr. Cowper, once so calmly indifferent to everything, was now both communicative and inquiring, and, as he spoke and gave information, or requested it, Mr. Cowper also had the watchful, furtive look of a man on the alert, who is ready for whatever chance may turn up—for money, for news, for help, or for hope.

"Well, and how are you?" said he, in his cheerful, airy way, and without seeming to notice the start of surprise which Edward Graham had not been able to repress on seeing him; "and how have you got on since we met, or rather parted, in Saint Aubin? Well, I hope, and still faithful to architecture?"

"And how have you got on?" retorted Mr. Graham, by no means pleased with this address. "Still faithful to the bar, I hope?"

"Well, no," candidly answered Mr. Cowper. "I have given up the bar, to tell you the truth," he confidentially added. "I found it slow."

"I believe you found architecture slow formerly?" said Mr. Graham, dryly.

"Awfully slow, and therefore I left it; but I now think the bar slower still. Now, don't you find architecture slow?" he added, suddenly, and his look wandered significantly round the room, the furniture of which had got rather dingy all these years.

"No; why should I?" sharply answered the young architect.

"Ah! plenty to do," remarked Mr. Cowper, with a half-smile—"houses, villas, and so on, and a heavy bill paid in crisp bank-notes every now and then. Lucky fellow! Well, *I* find the bar slow, though, to be sure, everything is slow in this world of ours—very slow," added Mr. Cowper, gently sipping some cold brandy-and-water which his host had poured out for him. "Now, Saint Aubin was as slow a place as one can imagine!" And, so saying, he looked hard at Edward Graham.

The young man was silent—he had nothing to say about Saint Aubin.

"I was there last spring," resumed Mr. Cowper; "and I declare it was as slow as ever. By-the-by, Mr. Bertram was rather unwell—I hear he is very ill now; and he had quite veered round about the turret. The inspector had died suddenly, the commission had given up the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and Mr. Bertram considered himself an ill-used man. Your turret, which he called his, was, he declared, both beautiful and solid, and he mourned over it; and Mr. Kenelm, a new-comer, told me confidentially that Mr. Bertram must have been a heavy loser by that turret of his, sir. To do him justice, Mr. Bertram also seemed very sorry for you."

"Mr. Bertram is very kind," said Edward Graham, ironically.

"Never came to any settlement, I suppose?" remarked Mr. Cowper. "Rather hard upon you. But you were pre-

cipitate. I told you so at the time. Where was the use? I always take things easy," he resumed, in his complacent way; "but you never did. I remember when we were both at the old fellow's at Fulham—by the way, what has become of him?"

"He is dead," dryly replied Mr. Graham, who did not relish this allusion to their early companionship.

"Is he?" said Mr. Cowper, taking another sip of brandy-and-water—"poor old fellow! He was clever in his way. Where did he pick up all those things he made us draw, I wonder? I remember them, tombs, chapels, monuments—they were really good, were they not?"

"They were the masterpieces of mediæval art," said Edward Graham.

"Ah! to be sure, you are up to all that. Well, I am sorry that architecture was slow, very sorry that the bar is worse. I wonder what I shall take to?" reflectively added Mr. Cowper. "Perhaps, I shall turn nephew, and cultivate my uncle, Mr. Lennard."

"Why not your aunt, Miss Cowper?"

"Oh! my aunt and I have had a difference. She was really getting too mediæval and too earnest. I endeavored to show her the error of her ways and affronted her, which was a pity, for she was very kind, after a fashion. Did you ever see her about these almshouses? No. Well, they are not built yet. Yes, I must cultivate my uncle, Mr. Lennard. Saint Aubin is slow, but one gets used to that; and there is capital fishing; and there are some rather nice girls, too," kindly added Mr. Cowper.

"And Mr. Lennard is willing to be cultivated?" suggested Edward Graham, looking skeptic.

"Not willing, my dear fellow, but most anxious. The poor old gentleman has made rather a bad thing of his difference with Mr. Bertram. He and Saint Aubin have quarreled, you know, and Saint Aubin is always getting the best of it. You cannot imagine how it worries him. He is always up to some mischief or other to vex Saint Aubin, and Saint Aubin pays him back richly, and the war goes on. The last battle was about the sea-baths. Mr. Lennard laid a complaint that the police regulations were not carried out, whereupon French Saint Aubin blackballed him from the Cercle—a strong step, which it had not yet taken; and Eng-

lish Saint Aubin turned him out of the reading-room—so the poor old boy is getting tired of it, I suppose, and wants me to cultivate him."

"And, perhaps, to get friends back again with Saint Aubin," shrewdly suggested Mr. Graham.

"I should not wonder if that were his feeling, and perhaps—yes, perhaps, I might do worse. Fishing is slow, but it can't be slower than the bar," added Mr. Cowper, with a tinge of melancholy in his voice. "You have no thoughts of going back to Saint Aubin, I suppose?" said he, with a sudden change. "No—ah! I thought so. And you find architecture to answer?"

"A man must have a profession," replied Edward Graham, scorning to tell an untruth, "and on that plea mine answers me."

"Must a man have a profession?" asked Mr. Cowper. "Do you know, that seems a very open question to me? However, you will stick to architecture, I see. Well, somehow or other, I have never been able to do it. There is nothing of the bur in me," added Mr. Cowper, gracefully taking the last sip out of his glass, and rising to go. "I stick to nothing. Good-night. I dare say the next account you hear of me is that I am virtuously settled in Saint Aubin. Don't you think, though, it will be horribly dull?" he added, with something like gloom.

"Oh! it will be slow, but sure," was the consolatory answer.

"I suppose so. Well, good-night," and he walked out, and Edward Graham sighed, relieved, but, true to his old superstitious feeling, he wished "that Cowper had not turned up so soon after his conversation with Mr. Blake."

And, indeed, when the young architect called again on Mr. Blake at the end of the week, he was denied admittance by a solemn footman, who informed him that Mr. Blake was too ill to see any one. "My usual luck," thought the poor fellow. "But, then, Dick Cowper looked in upon me that evening."

But even an evil eye cannot exercise a permanent influence. Mr. Blake got well, and Edward Graham and he went down to Blake House together, and the young architect spent two weeks there, and everything was going on charmingly, when Mr. Blake was ordered to some watering-place or other

at the end of England farthest from Blake House, and everything was put by and suspended, to the young man's consternation.

"Oh! I shall be back in a fortnight," said Mr. Blake, cheerfully; "but I like to see it going on; so, as you have so much to do, Mr. Graham, why, you had better go back to town."

"The weather may change," suggested Edward Graham.

"Not a bit—not a bit; we are in for a fine September, Mr. Graham, and October will be better still. However, you must not give me the slip. I must have you by the tenth, Mr. Graham—not a day later."

Mr. Graham was imprudent enough to suggest the eighth, or even the sixth, but Mr. Blake scouted either.

"The tenth, Mr. Graham—Thursday, the tenth, if you please." And thus they parted.

"Will he be back by the tenth?" mused Edward Graham, as he leaned back in the railway carriage, and his eye wandered over a rich landscape, which he did not see; "or will he put me off again, and keep me years, perhaps, without even paying me the little he owes me now? Sir Edward Shrievewell was sick of him, I know. Please Heaven that such, too, may not be my fate before I have done with Mr. Blake!"

Night had set in when Edward Graham reached his lodgings.

"Three letters for you, sir," said the maid, as she opened the door of his parlor, and placed the light she held on the table; "and Mrs. Rawlings says, sir, that one of them must be from foreign parts, on account of the stamp, and the postman says it is over-weight, and there was eightpence to pay, and Mrs. Rawlings paid it, and she said she was sure you would not mind."

"All right—all right," said Edward Graham, a little impatiently.

In a moment his keen eye had singled out the foreign letter from its companions. At once his hand was stretched out toward it, and, as he took it up, and recognized his aunt's scrawling handwriting, and the Saint Aubin post-mark, a flush rose to his olive cheek, and a quicker throb came to the pulses of his heart. What had taken his aunt over to Saint Aubin?

What would she have to tell him? The past was dead; he knew it, and had no hopes, no illusions concerning that dead past, and yet his heart beat as we said, and he felt the thrill of a by-gone pain as he opened his aunt's letter and read it, standing by the cold, unfriendly hearth of his cheerless home.

Wounds heal over, and scars are hidden, and brave hearts learn to suffer in silence, and the world easily forgets the very existence of their sorrows; but, though great troubles do not always work great changes in our outward life, that nature must indeed be shallow on which grief can pass and "make no sign."

To plunge into the very middle of a subject was Mrs. Graham's method in conversation. She was less erratic in her letters, but traces of her tendency were apparent, nevertheless, and her nephew was more annoyed than surprised to have to read her epistle to the very last line before he could apprehend its meaning.

"My dear Boy:

"You must try and come at once and catch the train, and not lose a moment," impetuously began Mrs. Graham. "Mrs. Petherick says there is a new boat, and that you must take it, as one is not half so ill upon it as on the others, but Captain Jekyll says it is all bosh. However, I wish I had known about it, for I was dreadfully sick. At all events, you must make haste and come; but pray, my dear boy, do not think any more of Lily Scot, as I really believe she is going to get married. It is no use telling you to whom nor talking about it; of course, it is over and all that, still it must be painful, and that was why I did not tell you I was coming, but Mrs. Scot wrote such a letter that I thought the wedding-day was fixed. However, when you come, you can go straight to the Cité de Jérusalem and have your old room, and I shall go round and have a talk with you. Remember that, if you want money, I have plenty just now. You will be shocked to see Mr. Bertram; he is as white as a ghost. I never saw any one so altered. Little Lily Bertram, too, who is as tall as Lily Scot now, is much changed; she is getting quite a pretty girl, but is so much fagged by her father's illness that it makes one's heart ache to look at her. Mr. Lennard is as wicked as ever, and the quarrel has not been

made up; but Mrs. Scot is all for him now, and, though she became so mysterious as soon as I arrived, I may as well tell you why: Mrs. Petherick declares that Lily Scot is sure to marry Mr. Cowper. He has been *so* attentive of late, and the sailor-boy, who is at Saint Aubin just now, is like a Bengal tiger about it—so says Captain Jekyll, but it was Mrs. Petherick who told me first, for Mrs. Scot, though she drops hints, and is affronted with Mr. Bertram because he took a musical governess for Lily Bertram, does not talk of it. However, as all Saint Aubin knows of it, I cannot see why you should not, especially as Mr. Cowper is going to settle at Saint Aubin, and you really must come about your own business. Mr. Bertram would not tell me any more, and that was not much, though, I hope, my dear boy, it is all true; but he certainly is very anxious that you should have compensation for your cruel loss, and he feels, poor man, that he has no time to lose. So, pray, do come at once, for surely it is worth the risk. Louisa has just come to say that it is post-time, so good-by, my dear Edward; come, and lose no time. Mr. Bertram is very ill; poor little Lily Bertram is not aware of it, but the doctor has given him up, and there is no knowing how long he may last.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"MARY GRAHAM."

In vain Edward Graham tried to control his feelings as he read this letter. The blood would forsake his cheeks, a jealous pain would thrill his very heart. "And will she marry him? will that be the end? was it for that he came here, to know how matters stood? was it for that he went to Saint Aubin? Of course, it was that he meant by settling virtuously down in Saint Aubin and cultivating Mr. Lennard. He meant an idle life at Mr. Lennard's expense, and marriage with Lily Scot! Well, what is it to me? Is she not free? If Mr. Lennard wants to get back into Saint Aubin society by making his nephew marry the prettiest and most agreeable girl in the place, what is it to me? Must she not marry some one, and can I say that Richard Cowper will make an unkind husband?" All this was very true, but it was hard to think that the girl he had so loved was going to marry the man whom he had always disliked. And yet Mr. Graham was just enough to confess to himself that Miss Scot

might be a happy woman with Richard Cowper—"happier than with poverty and me," was his sad and bitter conclusion.

Those passages of his aunt's letter which referred to the probability of Miss Scot's marriage had engrossed him to the detriment of all she said concerning Mr. Bertram. He had read and understood all she wrote, but vaguely and coldly. The poor man was ill and was going to die, and Mr. Graham forgave him the great wrong he had done him, and was sorry for his daughter. But such things happen daily; and, as to going over to Saint Aubin at a sick man's call and for a sick man's fancy, in the vain hope of getting back what was irretrievably lost, why, it was mere folly, and not to be thought of, that was all.

Edward Graham took up his other letters; they were unimportant, and he soon threw them down again and read his aunt's epistle once more. He read it till, little by little, he worked himself into a fever of unrest, and strange, tormenting fancies began to flit through his brain. Why should Lily Scot marry Richard Cowper? He could not believe that she really liked that indolent, *blasé* man. It was one of those dreadful marriages of expediency in which women give their all for a comfortable home. Oh! if any one could save her—so sweet, so fair, so gentle, and so good—from that hard lot! A little money would do it—money, the blessing and the curse of lovers! For Mr. Graham was a lover still. The mere thought that Lily Scot could be utterly lost to him showed him how strong a hold she still had on his heart. He had given her up, but no doubt there had been a lurking hope in this very renunciation, since the faintest chance of winning her back could agitate him thus. That message of Mr. Bertram's, which he had so scouted, suddenly wore a look of probability. Why should a dying man send for him if there were not something in it after all? Compensation! Was it possible that he should get back his own? Why, in that case, and if Lily Scot were still free and willing, he could—why not?—he could marry her. Give him back his hundred a year, added to his improved prospects, and Mr. Graham could certainly marry; not in splendor, or affluence, or even much comfort, but still he could marry. And Mrs. Scot, and Jane, and Louisa! The young man paused in his speculations as he remembered the existence of these

three women; he had forgotten them, but he could not help recollecting them now—the delicate, exacting mother, the giddy, useless sisters. What should he do with them? He bit his lip and sighed. Lily Scot, who had seemed so near that he could see the light in her dark eyes, that she seemed to be standing by him in the dull English parlor, making it pleasant with her smile, Lily Scot, alas! faded once more and became as shadowy an image and as dim as she had been for the last two years and more.

"I must not think of her," said the poor fellow to his own thoughts; "the bitter struggle is over—why renew it? We cannot marry, and we must not love. It would be madness in me, and misery to both; but there may be something in Mr. Bertram's message, after all, and—and, aunt is right, I must go over to Saint Aubin and see about it. It is worth the risk."

If the young man deluded himself, if to meet Lily Scot once more, and be on the spot ready for the faintest chance of winning her back from Dick Cowper, was as much in his secret thoughts as to "see about it," on Mr. Bertram's vague promise of compensation, who shall blame him?

CHAPTER XXVI.

NIGHT had set in when the rickety car which conveyed passengers from Dieppe to Saint Aubin rattled into the court-yard of the Cité de Jérusalem with the usual clatter of horses and jingling of bells. The shrill voices of Norman servant-girls rose above the din, and, in the swift moving of lights to and fro, Edward Graham caught glimpses of the stone wall with its wreaths of vine-leaves, of the old wooden staircase clinging to the ancient house, of a broken shed, and an open stable-door, all no sooner seen than they vanished in darkness like that past which they brought back so vividly, and which had begun in hope and ended in disappointment.

"My dear boy! I am so glad!" said Mrs. Graham's cheery voice as he stepped down; "you did so well to come, and your room is ready and supper waiting—and *are* you tired?"

And so, scarcely waiting for his answer, she went on talking as they ascended together the gloomy staircase which the young man knew so well, and entered the room in which the happiest dream and the saddest drama of his life had both come to their bitter end. But, though he looked round him, Edward Graham felt a much older man than if last May had not seen his twenty-eighth birthday; he was not, and he had never been, one to repine under the hard yoke of ill-fortune. Bitterness he had felt, he could not help it, but he had never deigned to express it to strangers, nor had he grieved the only being who really loved him by allowing her to fathom the depths of his double disappointment. It was hard but inevitable that Mrs. Graham, who was shrewd in some things, but not always clear-sighted, should conclude that "Ned had never cared so very much for Lily Scot after all," and should not have feared for her nephew—as a wiser woman might—the dangerous proximity of his old love.

"And, now, will you have your supper up here," she asked, as earnestly as if supper had been the great object of Edward Graham's journey, "or will you take it below?"

"I dined in Dieppe, aunt, and, to tell you the truth, I want especially to know what Mr. Bertram said to you."

"Oh! he said nothing," cried Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows—"nothing at all, Ned, but that he wanted very much to see you and tell you something he could not possibly write about, and which would atone, and more than atone, for all you had gone through."

Edward Graham looked at his watch—a quarter to eight—did his aunt think it was too late to call on Mr. Bertram?

"Oh! dear, no; he was most urgent in saying that you were to go at once to him, so you can just have some supper—"

"Thank you, auntie; but I shall go to him now, and—"

"But supper is ready—a roast fowl," said Mrs. Graham, looking dismayed; "you like a hot roast fowl."

"I like a cold one, too, aunt; besides, I must be home by the tenth," for a little professional business had delayed Edward Graham's journey to the last moment.

"You always were a willful boy," retorted Mrs. Graham, provoked.

Edward Graham smiled, took his hat, went to the door, then, with his hand on the lock, paused and said:

"And how—how is Miss Scot, aunt?"

Mrs. Graham at once became grave and guarded.

"Oh! Lily is very well," she answered, in a constrained voice. "Of course, I had to tell her you were coming. I suppose you will call?"

Edward Graham did not answer.

"You wrote to me that she was on the verge of marriage with Richard Cowper; is it really so?"

"Oh! dear, no," cried Mrs. Graham, looking half vexed. "It seems Mrs. Petherick was all wrong. I really begin to think that Mrs. Petherick does invent. Why, she told me the other day—"

"Dear auntie, I beg your pardon, but were you really mistaken?"

"Well, my dear boy, it is not an hour ago that Mrs. Scot declared she could not imagine what had put such an idea into my head, for that Mr. Cowper was the last man she would give her daughter to, and that Mr. Lennard was a bear, if ever there was one. I fancy," added Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose meditatively—"I really do, Ned, that Mr. Cowper expected his uncle to do something handsome for him when he married, and that Mr. Lennard objected to Lily's poverty. Mr. Cowper is gone no one knows where, and, as Mrs. Petherick—"

"O aunt," he cried, in a fever, "is Lily engaged, or has she been engaged, to Dick Cowper?—that is the question!"

"Certainly not," she triumphantly replied.

Edward Graham breathed freely—his dark eyes sparkled.

"Then, if Mr. Bertram really means to give me compensation, if I can really recover my lost money," he said, his lips quivering with emotion.

"Of course," interrupted Mrs. Graham, impetuously. "I know what you mean. Of course, you could marry the dear girl." She spoke with ardor equal to his own; and, with her usual imprudence, she added, "And, my dear Ned, I don't think she has forgotten you."

He could not speak. He was in a fever. He wrung her hand, and ran down-stairs, and went out into the dark streets of Saint Aubin to meet the dying man with a light heart. He was not colder or harder than other men, but he was

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He could not speak. He was in a fever. He wrung her hand, and ran down-stairs, and went out into the dark streets of Saint Aubin to meet the dying man with a light heart. He was not colder or harder than other men, but he was

still young, happiness was still much to him, and he was apt to forget what its cost might be to others.

With a troubled heart the young man left his aunt at the door of Mrs. Scot's house, and, looking up at a light burning in one of the upper windows, he wondered if she who had once been his Lily cast that slender shadow on the muslin curtains. But, strong though may be a man's love, a man's ambition in its failure or success is strong too, and when Edward Graham crossed the court of Mr. Bertram's house, and saw the evening sky, with its shining stars, where the turret—his turret—had once been, a mingled wrath and sorrow, in which Lily Scot had no part, filled his whole being, and for the time at least drove her image away. A strange servant-man let him in, and, without even looking at his card, said at once that monsieur was expecting monsieur, and would monsieur come up-stairs.

Mr. Bertram's room was on the first floor of the house. As the man admitted Edward Graham, and having muttered a few words closed the door again, the young man's quick ear recognized the tones of Lily Bertram's voice on the stairs, saying, in a half-whisper:

"Was that the doctor, Sévérin?"

"No, ma'm'selle, it is the Monsieur Anglais, and no one is to go in until—"

The rest of the answer was lost in the shutting of the door, and, with this intimation that their conference was to be private and undisturbed, Edward Graham found himself alone in the presence of Mr. Bertram.

The room was large and lofty, and the shade on the lamp made it seem almost dark. Yet even from the door the whiteness of Mr. Bertram's face, as he sat motionless in a deep arm-chair, struck his visitor. It was as if Death were gazing at him with that still look, and waiting for him to come near and question, and sat there calmly ready to unfold unto him tidings of that solemn world which is farther away from us than all the stars of all the spheres, and yet so near that one moment is enough to cross its awful brink.

"Mr. Graham, I believe," said Mr. Bertram, quite in his old manner, and that manner and his voice at once broke the spell. Imagination was silenced. It was Mr. Bertram that Edward Graham looked at, and Mr. Bertram had something to say to him which might affect the whole of his future life.

"Pray, be seated, Mr. Graham," resumed Mr. Bertram, in a low, languid voice. "You will excuse my not rising, of course. I am ill—quite ill, as you have no doubt been told by Mrs. Graham. She was good enough to call and see me the other day, and I expressed to her my wish of having some conversation with you. I have had that wish a long time—a long time," repeated Mr. Bertram; "but I did not know how far circumstances would second my intentions—and some things cannot be put in writing."

He paused, and looked at Edward Graham, who remained silent. Mr. Bertram resumed, with something like subdued irritation—perhaps, at not having been questioned:

"I always felt for you in that matter of the turret; it really was very hard upon you."

"Hard!" thought Edward Graham, knitting his dark brows.

"It was Mr. Lennard's doing. A bad man, Mr. Graham—a very bad man. You see how ill I am now. Well, sir, if my illness were to terminate fatally, my child and all she has would actually be in that man's power. Monsieur Grandjean left all Miss Bertram's inheritance under Mr. Lennard's control, and actually appointed him her guardian in the event of my decease."

"You can appoint another guardian, Mr. Bertram," said Edward Graham. "Your authority is paramount."

"Of course," impatiently answered Mr. Bertram. "But, if I do, there is no provision for Miss Bertram; and Mr. Lennard can actually refuse to make her any allowance out of her own property."

"There can be no court of law that would not compel him to do so," remarked Mr. Graham, a little indignantly.

"Very true," dryly answered Mr. Bertram; "but, perhaps, you will kindly tell me, Mr. Graham, who is to take up my daughter's cause, and bring it before the courts of law?"

"Has Miss Bertram no relations?"

"None who would interfere. You may have heard that Monsieur Grandjean was a self-made man. His second or third cousins would certainly not trouble themselves about my daughter's guardianship, especially as, in the event of her death, the money goes to charities."

Edward Graham silently wondered what he had to do with all this.

"I have only one way left to save my child," resumed Mr. Bertram, with a heavy sigh—"to place her under a husband's protection before I die."

The young man gave an involuntary start. At once he understood why Mr. Bertram had wished to see him, and had not cared to put down his intentions in writing; but, though his face fell, he only made a quiet objection:

"Does marriage annul Mr. Lennard's authority over Miss Bertram's fortune?"

"Yes, sir," almost sharply rejoined Mr. Bertram. "Monsieur Grandjean, though wrong-headed in some things, had sense enough to leave the matter of Miss Bertram's marriage wholly to me. He knew that I only could understand and carry out Miss Bertram's position; and so her fortune, a handsome one, will be at her husband's disposal on her marriage-day, subject, of course, to those guarantees on his part which prudence demands. I should wish Miss Bertram's property to be settled on herself and her children. Such, too, was Monsieur Grandjean's wish. Indeed, I have a copy of his will here," he added, stretching out his hand to the drawer of a little bureau by his side.

"Excuse me," said Edward Graham, arresting him, "your word is enough. Besides—"

"A husband's authority over his wife's income is sufficient," interrupted Mr. Bertram, anticipating his meaning, as he thought; "quite right. Well, Mr. Graham, you know now why I intend putting my daughter beyond the power of that unscrupulous man, whom I believe capable of forcing Miss Bertram into an uncongenial marriage with some needy relation of his own."

Edward Graham said not a word. He knew what was coming, and could wait.

"Such are my intentions," resumed Mr. Bertram in his lofty way, and he could not help waving his hand and flashing his diamond-ring; "and you, Mr. Graham, are the man to whom I should wish to confide my daughter's happiness. That happiness, I need not say, has been my first thought, but I am also mindful that this house—her house—has been the cause of some loss to you—loss of position and money. However, Miss Bertram's hand and fortune will more than

atone for the past, and I know you, Mr. Graham—you are a gentleman by birth, a gentleman in feeling, and to you I can trust my child."

The young man leaned back in his chair and smiled, as with his glove he lightly tapped his knee.

So that was Mr. Bertram's atonement. He, Edward Graham, was to marry Lily, little slip-shod Lily! And that was how, too, Mr. Bertram, even on the brink of the grave, combined love for his daughter, revenge on his false friend, and justice to the man whom he had wronged. The young man could have laughed at it all, it seemed so dreary and so hollow.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Bertram, bending forward as if to read his answer in his face, and speaking with a sick man's irritability, "have you apprehended my meaning? do you require time to consider, or can you oblige me with an immediate answer?"

"I require no time for consideration, Mr. Bertram," answered Edward Graham, quietly, but somewhat sadly. "More than two years ago I was engaged to Miss Scot. You know how and why we parted. When I learned from my aunt that you had some scheme through which I might regain what I had lost, my secret hope in coming to hear you was to find Miss Scot still free and as willing to renew our engagement as I was. After the proposal you have just made to me, that hope must perish as though it had never been. I thank you for the honor you have done me, but, if you really wish to see Miss Bertram under the care of a husband, I cannot be that fortunate man."

There was just a touch of irony in the young man's voice as he uttered the last words, but Mr. Bertram, who looked at him in blank disappointment, did not seem even aware of this. He had lived in the worship of himself and his belongings for so many years, that he did not anticipate the young man's rejection of his daughter. True, Mr. Graham had liked Lily Scot once on a time, but that was over, and to prefer a by-gone love to Miss Bertram seemed amazing to Miss Bertram's father. At the same time, that habit of chivalrous sentiment which Mr. Bertram had cultivated all his life tempted him to remark:

"Mr. Graham, I honor you for your fidelity, but allow me to ask you if it be wise? Miss Scot is lost to you; then

ought you to reject such a chance as, I need not tell you, comes not twice in a man's lifetime?"

It was hard to hear this and not make some bitter reply, but all Edward Graham said was:

"Allow me to ask you if the man whose thoughts involuntarily turn to another woman is the man you, Mr. Bertram, ought to wish your daughter to marry?"

"The man who marries Miss Bertram," began Lily's father in his grand old way, but a spasm which contracted his features with sudden pain did not allow him to finish the sentence.

"Shall I ring the bell?" asked Mr. Graham, struck with the death-like change in the sick man's aspect.

A wave of the hand, implying denial, was Mr. Bertram's only answer. After the silence of a few moments, during which his low, quick breathing was all that could be heard in the still room, he recovered and said:

"I hope I have not alarmed you. I am subject to these attacks, and very unpleasant they are. Well, Mr. Graham, I am sorry, for your sake, that we cannot come to an understanding. It is a pity; you had a chance—a rare chance, but it seems you cannot avail yourself of it. I regret it, also your disappointment. Miss Bertram, I need not say, will have no difficulty in finding one both able and willing to protect her; but time presses—my time may be short. Now, what do you think of Mr. Cowper?" he added, abruptly; "of course, I am aware that Mr. Cowper is a man of honor and a gentleman, but what do you think of his temper and habits?"

Edward Graham could not answer at first. It was such a strange, sharp surprise to find Richard Cowper meeting him there, too.

"Is Mr. Cowper free?" he asked, at length.

"Quite free," was the dry answer, uttered in a tone which roused within Edward Graham the jealous suspicion that Richard Cowper had not always been considered "quite free," and that Mr. Bertram knew it. Had there been anything between him and Lily Scot, after all? If so, what more could he desire than to see him Lily Bertram's husband? But, either because he had never liked Richard Cowper, or because he could not think without pity of a poor child given up to that selfish worldling, whose very good-

humor sprang from heartlessness, he yielded to the impulse which prompted him to say vehemently:

"You cannot mean it, Mr. Bertram. Richard Cowper is idle; he has no profession, and no wish for one. He is older than I am, and he is Mr. Lennard's nephew."

"They are not friends now," coolly said Mr. Bertram, ignoring the other objections. "Mr. Lennard has behaved very badly to Mr. Cowper. He lured him over to Saint Aubin with false promises, and, because Mr. Cowper would call upon me and pay me those marks of respect which I may say are my due, Mr. Lennard drove Mr. Cowper from him with contumely. My question to you, Mr. Graham, referred chiefly to Mr. Cowper's temper. Miss Bertram has always been very gently treated, and a sharp or imperative husband would make her very unhappy."

"Oh! Mr. Cowper is decidedly a good-tempered man," said Mr. Graham, dryly.

"I am happy to hear you confirm my opinion, Mr. Graham. All Mr. Lennard's preference is for that rough boy who went to sea, and, instead of staying there, unluckily came back the other day. If I were to die to-morrow, Mr. Graham, the man would force my child into a marriage with that rude youth; but Mr. Cowper he cannot endure."

"Poor little Lily!" thought Edward Graham; "no one who is not Mr. Lennard's enemy will suit your father."

Thus he thought, but he was silent. What could he say? He had come on a fruitless errand, renewed the old pain, and all in vain. The man before him was dying—he could see it in his face—and that man must leave his child—the child whom, spite his weakness and errors, he truly loved—in the power of his bitter enemy, of him who had brought some sorrow and more shame into his life. Mr. Graham pitied the father, but he pitied the daughter more, and with all his pity for these two he could not forget that his own lot was hard.

"Well, Mr. Graham, I will not detain you," said Mr. Bertram, after a pause; "if your mind should change—"

"It will not change, Mr. Bertram," was the grave but firm reply.

Mr. Bertram bent his head coldly, touched a silver hand-bell on the table, but did not hold out his hand to the man who had refused to become his son-in-law. A servant showed Mr. Graham down-stairs. As he stood on the last

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step, with the open door before him, letting in the cool night air, and a glimpse of the starry sky, a low voice said behind him:

"Good-night, Mr. Graham."

He turned round, and in the half-gloom saw Lily Bertram, tall, slender, and pale. She gave him a weary, wistful look, then stole up-stairs and vanished.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"And yet I must see her again before I leave this place," sadly thought Edward Graham, as he walked home to the Cité de Jérusalem, with his hopes as low as flowers over which a strong wind has just passed; "it would be mean—it would be cowardly to shun her. It will be a keen pain to me—to her, too, perhaps—and yet I must see her."

It would be hard, no doubt, but it would be sweet, too. It would be a sorrow, but it would also be a joy; and, though, as he went up the stairs of his room, the young man told himself he wished the meeting were well over, he thereby indulged in one of those bits of self-deception which are as the daily bread of our poor weak human hearts. To his surprise, he found Mrs. Graham and a cheerful supper-table both waiting for him.

"I could not let you have your cold supper after all," said Mrs. Graham, with her bright-blue eyes beaming; "but you will have to see me home. And now sit down and eat, like a good boy."

"My kind old auntie," said he, laying his hand on her shoulder, and looking down in her face with a smile.

Mrs. Graham had virtuously resolved not to put one question till "Ned, who must be starving, poor boy," had broken his fast; but now the temptation proved irresistible, and, fastening her anxious eyes on her nephew's face, she uttered a "Well?" that was both comprehensive and interrogative.

"Well, auntie," said Edward Graham, sitting down to his supper and speaking with that calmness which it is part

of a man's pride to wear through all the ills and troubles of life, "you would never guess what Mr. Bertram—who, by the way, is very ill, poor man—had to say to me, and what compensation he meant to give me for the past—he wanted me to marry Lily."

"To marry Lily!" repeated Mrs. Graham, amazed.

"Let us say Miss Bertram. Aunt, you must sup with me—here is a dainty bit of the breast for you. Yes, to marry Lily. He thought it a most excellent way of righting me, and cheating Mr. Lennard out of his authority over the poor child."

"I never heard anything like it," said Mrs. Graham, still amazed. Then, suddenly laying down her knife and fork, she exclaimed with one of those abrupt transitions to which she was subject, "And yet, do you know, Ned, it is a fine idea—it is a grand idea? Of course, it would make everything right, for the house would be yours then, and you could build up the turret again; and Lily is a dear child, and Mr. Lennard is an odious old wretch—"

"Aunt," interrupted the young man, half vexed and half amused, "you cannot be serious, you cannot think that I could possibly marry Lily, little Lily!"

"Oh! but she has grown," ingenuously remarked Mrs. Graham, looking at him, with simple earnestness in her guileless face—"she is a tall slip of a girl now."

Mr. Graham did not deign to argue the point. He drank off a glass of wine, made short work of the leg of a fowl, then said, quite composedly:

"The poor child is some ten years younger than I am, to begin with."

"What about it, Ned?—that is nothing. My dear husband—"

"Aunt, aunt, is it so long ago since you hoped I might marry some one else?"

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose and looking perplexed, "I am very sorry for you, but, since it can't be, I suppose it must not be; and I am afraid now it really is all over between you and Lily Scot, who is a dear girl, but not one to break her heart about it, you know; and, as she and you are really parted—"

"We only parted because ruin stepped in between us," interrupted Edward Graham, flushing red; "and if, instead

of ruin, prosperity had come, why should we not have remembered the old love?"

Mrs. Graham looked more perplexed than ever.

"Well, but it has not come," she argued; "and—and I am sorry to pain you, my dear boy, but I fear Miss Scot's feelings have undergone a change."

Mr. Graham's color fled, but he tried to smile as he said, "How so?"

"Well, after you and I parted this evening, Mr. Lennard's nephew came in to see Mrs. Scot—that lad who went to sea, you know—and he seemed to me very sweet upon Lily; and I really think she did not dislike it."

Mr. Graham winced, but he laughed and said "That boy!" seeming more amazed than indignant.

"He is quite a man now," argued Mrs. Graham; "and Mrs. Petherick's theory is that Mr. Lennard must do something to get back into society; and that though, when it came to the point, he did not choose to part with his money for Mr. Cowper, who is not his nephew at all, I believe, he may do so for young Lennard, his brother's son, who came back in the nick of time, and give him something handsome if he marries Lily."

Perhaps of all the proofs that Lily Scot was really lost to him, his no more, Edward Graham could have received none more convincing than the fashion after which Mrs. Petherick, and his aunt even, disposed of her in favor of other men. Richard Cowper, William Lennard, too, now could woo the girl who had once been all his. True, they had parted; true, his claim had been relinquished; but, even when love dies, there is a jealousy which survives it, and, when love only slumbers because of much sorrow, ready to waken at the first touch of joy, jealousy is ever with it, whether hidden or confessed. A thrill of sharp, angry pain shot through the veins of the young man, but he only laughed, as if in derisive amusement, and said:

"Well, aunt, what is all that to me?"

"Don't I say so?" argued Mrs. Graham, opening her eyes at his dullness. "And that is why you really might marry Lily Bertram."

"Yes, aunt, but I never will."

"You might do worse," said Mrs. Graham, nodding at him across the table. "She is a dear, good, warm-hearted child, to begin with!"

"But would she like it, to begin with?" said he, smiling.

"I always thought she was rather partial to you," remarked Mrs. Graham, with her usual candor; "and I feel sure that, if you say yea to Mr. Bertram's proposal, Lily will not say nay."

Edward Graham heard her impatiently. What did he care for Lily Bertram's yea or nay? The fair, calm face, the soft, dark eyes of Lily Scot passed before him in the half-gloom of the room, alluring him very sweetly, though, alas!—and he felt it—very vainly.

Mrs. Graham pursued, a little dreamily, and still rubbing her nose with her forefinger, a trick she had when she was either perplexed or abstracted:

"You see, Ned, life is a very odd thing, full of puzzles, and the oddest changes. Lily Scot is a dear, good girl, but I fancy she has given you up more entirely than I thought, or else she likes that young man, which I had no idea of an hour ago. Yes, life is like a fine piece of Eastern work which I saw once on a time! Oh! it was such a piece of work, all the colors of the rainbow were in it, I do believe, and there was a gold thread that ran through, and made it the handsomest thing I ever saw; but I have always heard that the Eastern people are full of whims. The workman had broken off the gold thread in one part of his woof, and I cannot say that he had improved it. Well, my dear boy, there is, I believe, such a gold thread in every man's life, and it is the girl or the woman whom he loves, or ought to love. I did think Lily Scot was the girl for you, but my sight is dim—she may not have been your thread of gold, after all! I fancy there is a higher strain in that little Lily Bertram than you will find in ninety-nine women out of a hundred. Take care, Ned, that when you reject her you do not cut off the gold thread in the pattern of your life!"

Edward Graham, who was filling his glass, smiled as he raised it to his lips.

"I like your gold thread, aunt," he said, leaning back in his chair; "but marry a crude, raw girl—not for the Tower of Babel could I do it."

"Ah! not for that only," cried the old lady, with glistening eyes. "Think of the youth and the innocence! Why, you would be like Adam with his Eve, a dear young thing all

your own, to make what you would like of. I wonder it does not tempt you."

And tempted Mr. Graham was for one moment. Yes, that vision of a fresh virgin heart was bewitching, but the thought of Lily Bertram, with her tangled hair, and her slip-shod feet, banished it as surely as ever evil fairy's wand transformed the beautiful princess into the unsightly peasant-girl.

"Dear old auntie," he thought, with a smile and a sigh, "her good, kind face may get as wrinkled as a sweet russet-apple, her heart will ever be tender, fresh, and young!"

"But it does not tempt you, and that gold thread is not to be your gold thread, after all," said Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "It can't be helped, but 'tis a pity, Ned, 'tis a pity. And now, what will you do?"

"Go back to London after to-morrow morning, auntie," he answered, trying to speak cheerfully, "and take you with me, if you will come."

"Perhaps I will, Ned; indeed, I have a great mind to go with you. Yes, I really think I will; indeed, I am quite determined, so that is settled. I suppose you will call on Mrs. Scot to-morrow?"

Mr. Graham gravely answered that he would certainly call on Mrs. Scot; and, as it was late by this, he again saw Mrs. Graham home. They did not speak much on the way. They both felt disappointed. Mrs. Graham thought ruefully that she had done more harm than good, and Edward Graham, little though he had hoped, knew now how much that little had been to him.

No moon lit the long, silent street in which Mrs. Scot lived, and, though gas was now extended to that portion of Saint Aubin, it was sparingly distributed, and lanterns were still used there at night by the timid. As Edward Graham and his aunt neared the door of Mrs. Scot's house, the will-o'-the-wisp light of a lantern came dancing toward them.

"Why, that is Mrs. Petherick," said Mrs. Graham, in her clear, frank voice.

"Of course, it is," answered Mrs. Petherick's cheerful accents; "and that is really Mrs. Graham out at this time of night! And Mr. Graham, too! Well, Captain Jekyll *did* say you were in the place; but I confess I thought it was one of his usual inventions. I am glad to find that Captain

Jekyll can say the truth at times. Of course, you know the sad news?" she added, with a sudden change of accent, and turning to Mrs. Graham as she spoke. "What! not know them? I thought it was over all Saint Aubin by this. Poor Mr. Bertram died suddenly ten minutes ago. A spasm, you know. Doctor Bellington always said he would go off in a moment. It seems he was talking to poor little Lily Bertram about her cuffs. 'I do wish you would not wear such long cuffs,' he was saying; 'it is ridiculous.' 'They are not very long, papa,' says the child. 'They are ridiculous!' says Mr. Bertram, who had grown rather cross of late; 'and I desire—' At that word the spasm came, and it was all over. As Mrs. Montague says, it really was like a judgment on the poor man for the words 'I desire.' People never should talk so, says Mrs. Montague."

"Oh, the child—the poor child!" cried Mrs. Graham, bursting into sudden tears. "O Ned, Ned! ain't you sorry? She is all alone now—all alone! No father to take care of her! All alone!"

And Mrs. Graham, spite her seventy years, wept freely.

Mr. Graham did not answer. He was a young soldier still in the great battle of life, not used to see his fellow-combatants drop down by his side; and he felt shocked and awed. That pitiless philosophy which life forces upon us, that teacher whose voice is more subtile and penetrating, deeper and more impressive than that of any preacher, spoke to him then. What was life when man's hold upon it was so brief? Ten minutes ago this man was talking about his daughter's cuffs, and now he had left that daughter forever; and, however hard or bitter her fate might be, he could not raise a finger to protect or defend her. He had left that sweet present, which we call life, for the shadowy future of death. He was nothing now, unless in the speech of the men and women who had survived him. They would comment on his trivial words, on his foibles of temper, on his illness, on his goods and chattels, on his child, take them up in turns for a moment, then drop them down again and let them be, and Mr. Bertram and his living presence and his memory would all drift down the swift tide of Time, and vanish there from human ken for evermore. Oh! what was life, and what was love, even though it wore the fair face of Lily Scot? and Ambition, with her promises, and her sculptured

turrets, as frail as a child's house of cards, which a breath can lay low—what were they that a man should ever have given them thought and passionate desires?

"Well, well, it is sad," resumed Mrs. Petherick, with a conventional sigh. "Good-night, Mrs. Graham—good-night, Mr. Graham;" and, preceded by Marie, the Norman girl, who carried the lantern, she went down the street with light and nimble steps.

"Good-night, Ned," said Mrs. Graham, with a heavy sigh. "You need not knock. I hear them coming."

Low, laughing voices were approaching from within the house; a light flashed through the chinks of the door which suddenly flew open; a tall young man stepped out into the street; before he passed into the gloom, the light fell on his face, and Edward Graham knew him in a moment. He knew, too, the slender figure half bending in the darkness of the archway and the voice which said softly:

"Good-night, William."

"Good-night, aunt," quietly said Edward Graham, as he walked away.

He had spoken very calmly, but jealousy, sudden, keen, and irresistible, had stung him, and, alas! with that sting fled all the philosophy, all the indifference to life and love which Mr. Bertram's death had called up.

"Why, that's Mr. Graham!" said Louisa, peering out after him in the darkness of the street. "He should have had a light."

"As if he did not know the way to the house!" cried Jane, with unconscious irony on the past.

"I am sorry he did not come in," said Lily, in a low tone.

"Shall I go and call him back?" asked William Lennard, with fierce politeness.

"He will come to-morrow," innocently remarked Mrs. Graham; "and it is late, and the dreadful news have upset us. Was not Mrs. Petherick here? Did she not tell you?"

But Mrs. Petherick had not been there, and they knew nothing, and were sobered and silenced out of all petty gossip and foolish jealousy by the tale which Mrs. Graham had to tell.

"Poor Lily, poor child," softly said Miss Scot, "I think I will go in to her."

And, walking out into the street, she knocked at the next

door, which opened and let her within what all Saint Aubin had once called so emphatically Mr. Bertram's house.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MANY changes had taken place in Saint Aubin of which Mr. Graham knew nothing—trivial changes, some of which, however, were to tell on the whole of his future life. One of these was that Miss Scot had ceased to teach Lily Bertram. To Miss Scot herself Mr. Bertram had declared with his usual courtesy that the loss of her tuition was an irreparable one for Miss Bertram, but that his unfortunate illness left him no choice—he must have his daughter's constant society, and so forth. Unluckily, some good soul had taken care to tell Mrs. Scot that Miss Scot's ignorance of music was his real motive for the change. Mrs. Scot's amazed and dignified displeasure on hearing this exceeded all bounds. Poor Mr. Bertram! illness must surely have affected his brain for him to have such absurd fancies. Why, it was only to oblige him that she had allowed her daughter to give so much of her time to his, and it was quite a relief to get Lily back again. And so it came to pass that Lily was no more Miss Bertram's daily companion, and that polite coolness had sprung up between the two households. Mrs. Scot sent in formal inquiries concerning Mr. Bertram's health, and Mr. Bertram sent back formal thanks for Mrs. Scot's kindness, but the old friendship seemed to have ebbed all away, and it was only the sudden calamity that had befallen her former pupil which now induced Lily Scot to cross the once familiar threshold. Hers was not, however, the first visit which that bereaved house received, and, as she passed by the open dining-room door, Miss Scot was a little startled to see Mr. Lennard sitting there alone with a lamp burning dimly on the table, and papers scattered before him. He looked up on hearing her light footstep, and beckoned her within.

"Thank you for coming, Miss Scot," he said, composedly. "I was going to send for you. I really think you are the

only person who can manage that foolish child up-stairs. She has refused to see me. It will do for to-night, but to-morrow she must know better. Will you kindly explain to her that I am her guardian—that is to say, her master? If her father has left a will, and she knows something about it, she had better say so. It would be more pleasant if the responsibility of the funeral did not rest upon me. Of course, in this country, it must take place after to-morrow. Will you kindly explain all that to her, Miss Scot? Excuse the trouble I give you," he added, after a brief pause, "but I hope that you will soon take her once more under your care."

"I shall give your message to Miss Bertram," answered Miss Scot, rather coldly.

"And the rest may remain in abeyance, eh?" quickly retorted Mr. Lennard. "Well, well, we shall see. But do oblige me by dropping that Miss Bertram—it is absurd, you know—quite absurd."

Lily did not answer, but her quiet and silent face held forth little encouragement. Mr. Lennard was held at arm's length, and he knew it.

"Sorry you don't agree with me about the Miss Bertram," said he, dryly; "and I will not detain you. By-the-way, was William with you this evening?"

Miss Scot steadily replied that Mr. William Lennard had been at her mother's house that evening, and, when Mr. Lennard dryly retorted, "Ah! I thought so," she gazed at him very calmly. That he had warned off Richard Cowper she knew, just as his perverse hate for the dead man had ruined all her hopes more than two years ago. If he chose to warn off William Lennard now, after having tolerated, or seemed to tolerate, the young man's first visits, she must bear it; but surely they were not so low that Mr. Lennard should think he could bribe them with the situation of Miss Bertram's governess.

"And yet what a blessing and what a loss that has been!" thought poor Lily Scot, as she went up-stairs, with a sigh.

Lily Bertram was locked up in her room, and it was only on hearing Lily Scot's voice that she opened the door and let her in. Her face was pale, her eyes were red, her hair was disheveled—she had been lying on her bed, giving herself up to grief with the utter abandonment of youth's first sorrow.

She clasped her arms around Lily's neck, and laid her head on the shoulder of her friend, but she did not speak. With gentle words and tender caresses Miss Scot did her best to soothe that silent grief. She did not attempt direct consolation, but she suggested all that could soften a blow so cruel and so sudden; and she also gave some wise counsel. Lily Bertram heard her for some time, then looked up and sighed:

"No, Lily dear," she said, sadly, "you mean well, but it can't be. I can't submit to dear papa's enemy. Besides," she added, with another sigh, "I shall not stay in Saint Aubin. Dear papa wrote to Miss Cowper to know if she could not take care of me, and she has answered very kindly, so I shall go to her. Dear papa—the letter came by this evening's post, and he said Miss Cowper *was* a lady; and—and I shall go to her," said Lily, with a quivering lip.

"My dear, do not delude yourself, Mr. Lennard is your guardian, and he will not permit it."

"But my papa wishes it!" cried Lily; "and shall I not obey my papa, and not Mr. Lennard? Besides, to live with him—no, I never could bear *that!*"

Miss Scot looked at the poor girl and sighed over her ignorance. She had borne so many things in her young life, things very hateful in their way, but Lily Bertram had never had anything to bear, and could talk in that foolish fashion.

"Mr. Lennard may let you stay with us for a while," she suggested; "but I do not think he will allow you to go to Miss Cowper's, in England."

"Then I shall run away," said Lily, with much determination. "Shall I not obey papa, who is so kind and good? Is—ah!—*is* is over now forever and ever—it is *was* forever and ever too. O papa, my darling!" she cried, with a sudden and wild burst of grief, "are you dead?—are you dead, indeed?"

She thought no more of herself, of Mr. Lennard, of what she could bear or could not; she forgot all save the bitter and terrible fact that her father was dead! He had been a very weak man; his assumption of a name not his own—and Lily knew that now, and it had been a cruel blow to her integrity and her pride—had been worse than weakness; but she loved him with the clinging, passionate love of a daughter for her father; she would not see his failings, and she even felt a sort of righteous wrath against those whom she sus-

pected of being more clear-sighted than herself. He was not a Bertram, but he ought to have been one, and for his sake she would be called a Bertram; and he was her own amiable, accomplished father—the best, the dearest, the first of men. So her love, spite a sad shock, had remained strong, and, as her love had been, so was her grief. She flung herself across the bed in a transport of sorrow, and, clasping her hands above her head, she sobbed with something like despair. Miss Scot was looking at her in silent pity, when the door of the room opened, and her mother came in. Nothing could be more foreign to Mrs. Scot's self-indulgent habits than to stir from her sofa at this late hour, but such startling news as she had just received was enough to rouse her. It seemed as if the death of Mr. Bertram invested Mrs. Scot with sudden importance, and with the urgent desire to do something or other. She forgot that she was very poorly—that she really could not stir.

"I must go and see about it," said she to her two younger daughters; "the poor absurd child cannot be left alone. We must have her here." So Mrs. Scot went, and, though somewhat sobered when she found Mr. Lennard in possession, she yet got on pretty well with Miss Bertram's guardian, and went up to her room armed with a certain portion of his authority, and full of the best intentions.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Scot, decisively, and in that domineering tone which people instinctively assume toward other people in trouble, as if they had become a sort of public property—"my dear child, you must not go on so. I have been talking to Mr. Lennard, and you are to come to us at once. Mr. Lennard agrees with me that it is the only proper thing for you, so I have told Marie to pack up a few things for you, and Sarah will get a little supper ready—a bit of chicken, dear, and a little salad—and you must not take on so. It is a great trouble, to be sure," added Mrs. Scot, with a sigh, "but your poor papa would not like to see you in *that* way, I am sure, and it is a sort of flying in the face of Providence as well."

Miss Bertram raised her head slowly, and looked at Mrs. Scot with a grave surprise, verging on austere displeasure.

"Thank you, Mrs. Scot," she said, coldly; "you are kind, and you mean well, but I shall not leave this house while—while my dear father is in it."

Mrs. Scot stared at her, then at her daughter, then at Miss Bertram again, and at length she said:

"Is the child crazy?"

"Oh, no," Miss Bertram answered, with much dignity, "I am not mad at all, Mrs. Scot, and I am so much obliged to you, for you mean it kindly, I know; but I do not mean to leave my house while my dear father is in it, and, since you and Mr. Lennard have been talking it over," she added, emphatically, "perhaps you will kindly tell him so."

She spoke quietly, with a determination which was a whole revelation of unsuspected strength to Miss Scot, but which Mrs. Scot, who failed to understand that Mr. Bertram's daughter had suddenly leaped from childish youth into early womanhood, interpreted as too monstrous not to be a form of insanity.

"Poor little thing!" she murmured, tapping her forehead as she looked at her daughter; "but we can't leave her here, you know, Lily."

"I am sorry you don't understand, Mrs. Scot," said Miss Bertram, with a weary sigh, "but Lily does—explain it all, Lily dear," she added, sinking back on the bed, and, laying her head on the pillow, she closed her eyes like one who had done with all save grief.

Mrs. Scot did understand, and was nettled, not to say affronted.

"Lily, my dear, we are in the way," she said, stiffly. "I think we had better leave Miss Bertram. She knows that, whenever she wants us, we are at her command."

"Thank you, Mrs. Scot," said Lily Bertram, without raising her head or opening her eyes. "I know you mean very kindly.—Good-night, Lily dear. Thank you both for coming."

And thus, and most unsatisfactorily, the interview ended. Mrs. Scot, indeed, was much displeased, and talked all the way down-stairs about the absurdity of young people nowadays.

"No managing the young lady, Mr. Lennard," she observed, as she passed by the open door of the dining-room, where Mr. Lennard was still poring over the papers, with the light of the lamp falling full on his little bilious face and bald forehead.

"I suppose not," he said, dryly.—"Lily"—and he beckoned her in—"what about the will?"

"I know nothing, Mr. Lennard," she answered, coldly. "The poor child is very much overcome, and I did not put the question."

"And so she would not go with you!" he remarked, with one of his boring looks. "I wonder what the little vixen intends doing?"

Lily was silent. She saw no need to tell Mr. Lennard about Miss Cowper's letter and Lily Bertram's intentions.

"What did Mr. Lennard say to you?" asked Mrs. Scot, as her daughter joined her at the arched gateway which opened into the street. "The will? He asked *you* about the will? Well, I am sure! To ask *you* about the will, when *I* was there!"

In vain Lily mentioned that Mr. Lennard's question had already been put before her mother's arrival. Mrs. Scot scorned the explanation, and laughed disdainfully in the silent street.

"The way of the world, my dear," she said, as she entered her own house. "Once a woman is past thirty she is nobody; but I can tell Mr. Lennard what he is," added the indignant lady, unconsciously falling into that scorn of age with which she reproached Mr. Lennard, "he is an ill-mannered old bear!"

Mr. Bertram having died in the evening, the funeral could not take place the next day, but was put off to the morning following this.

"Ned, I should like to stay till the poor gentleman is buried, if you do not mind waiting for me," said Mrs. Graham, with a wistful look in her nephew's face.

"To be sure, auntie," he cheerfully replied. The delay was not much to his liking, but he would not have failed to please his kind old auntie for almost anything in the world.

"I suppose you will come in and see Mrs. Scot to-day?" continued Mrs. Graham.

"Not to-day, aunt. I shall go to Chanzy, and try to see Merle the builder."

"Ah! to be sure," remarked Mrs. Graham, whose face cleared in a manner that showed she had rather dreaded the interview with Lily Scot.

"I do not mean to call more than once," resumed Mr. Graham, "and that can be after the funeral."

"Then you do mean to go to the funeral?" cried Mrs.

Graham, whose blue eyes glistened. "My dear boy, it is noble! I am so glad!"

Her nephew smiled at her ardor.

"Yes, the man wronged me cruelly," said he, "but he would have atoned if he could, and I have no right to forget that."

Mr. Graham was disappointed in his journey to Chanzy. Monsieur Merle was at Vilaine, three leagues off.

"But he will be near Saint Aubin to-morrow, and I am sure he will call on you," eagerly said Madame Merle, whose fresh, comely face was beaming with pleasure at seeing that Monsieur Graham, of whose honorable conduct her husband was never weary of speaking.

"I shall be glad to see Monsieur Merle again," said Mr. Graham, with perfect sincerity, and he walked back to Saint Aubin in the grayness of evening.

The funeral took place early the next morning. Saint Aubin expected that Mr. Bertram would be buried in the old abbey of Saint Aubin *sur dun*. There was room for him in the vault where his mother and his reputed father slept. Mr. Lennard chose to settle matters otherwise.

"I am not a scion of the aristocracy, thank Heaven!" he said, with a sneer; "but I do not fancy having all the Bertram stock on my back. And what would they say if they found a Jones among them? No, Mr. Jones shall lie as nigh to his father-in-law, the dry-salter, as can be. He married the man's daughter, and cannot expect better company. If he wanted to be elsewhere, he should have made his will and said so."

The late Monsieur Grandjean's grave was in the old cemetery of Saint Aubin *sur dun*; and there, spite the distance, the funeral took place. Edward Graham followed it unasked—not from curiosity, for he felt none, nor yet from respect, for he had been too deeply wronged to forget it—but because Mr. Bertram had offered him his daughter in marriage. He wanted to save her from Mr. Lennard—no doubt he also wanted to be revenged upon his enemy; but with these feelings there had mingled a trust in Mr. Graham's honor, and a wish to atone for the past, which the young man acknowledged in the only way now left to him. He abstained, however, as far as he could, from mingling

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with the friends and acquaintances of the deceased, and lingered purposely in the rear.

Mr. Bertram had no relations in Saint Aubin; his daughter was ill with fatigue and grief, and Mr. Lennard followed the hearse as chief mourner. If he did it to show the little world of Saint Aubin that he triumphed in death over the man whom he had wronged in life, he paid dear for his victory. Looks full of irony, emphatic whispers, indignant though muttered exclamations, followed him from the house to the church, from the church to the cemetery, as surely as he followed the coffin of his injured friend. Mr. Lennard was not a patient man; he glanced at his tormentors, and set his teeth and clinched his hands with suppressed passion; and once, as he stood by the grave, he looked so like a wild beast at bay, so ready to turn and break through all conventional restraints into fury and scandal, that a great hush fell on the crowd, and the coffin was lowered in peace.

But the worst for the guilty man came when, all being over, the mourners dispersed. Mr. Bertram had been a popular man; many followed him to his last rest; they had not esteemed him, but they had liked him; and though, as they all went away, none could celebrate his virtues, every one had a kind word for his amiable and pleasing qualities. But the people who thus formed into groups to utter the praises of the dead kept aloof from the living. Mr. Lennard walked alone, shunned by all, and scowling fiercely at his enemies. Suddenly his little keen eyes singled out one, and at the sight of him his whole being seemed to swell with passion and wrath. Stepping across a grave, he went up to him and stared up in his face.

"Well, sir?" he said.

Mr. Graham looked down at Mr. Lennard with mingled indifference and contempt, then turned away, without even deigning to resent his insolent and aggressive tone by so much as a word.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"THE old boy got enough of it," said Captain Jekyll, with a suppressed "ha! ha!"

But Mr. Graham, to whom this overture was addressed, responded so coldly and so briefly that the captain drew away from him with an affronted look, and, muttering something about beggars and impudence, passed his arm within that of Dr. Billington, with whom he maintained a confidential discourse until they were on the road of Saint Aubin. No one else cared to address Mr. Graham. He had passed out of the life of Saint Aubin, and, though he was unaware of it, his aspect was stern and forbidding. The remembrance of the bitter past—and every step he took forbade him to forget—might be the cause of this; perhaps, too, the presence of William Lennard—tall, handsome, though rather sulky-looking—added to the bitterness of that past, and stung him in love, which was not all dead, and in pride, which never dies.

The day was gray and cloudy, and the little cemetery where Mr. Graham was soon left alone had a sad and desolate aspect. Yet he lingered there, walking among those unknown graves, drawn by that mysterious impulse which binds the living to the dead, till a soft rain began to fall, warning him to depart. On his way to the entrance-gate he passed near the spot where Mr. Bertram had just been buried, and, looking at it, saw Lily turning away from the mound beneath which lay, not merely all that she had loved, but also all that had loved her. She saw Mr. Graham, and, looking at him, said:

"Mr. Lennard locked me up, but I came all the same. Mr. Lennard put him here, but he shall not stay here, Mr. Graham."

And she moved on swiftly, giving him no time to reply, and leaving him struck with the pale strength of her silent face and tearless eyes. Nigh the gate he saw her joined by Marie, who came breathless and limping, as if she had hurried to overtake her young mistress. Some scolding, too, she seemed to indulge in, but Miss Bertram did not appear to heed her. She went on like a silent vision through the falling rain, and Mr. Graham, looking after them till they

vanished, slowly left the place and took away with him a picture of the cloistered cemetery with its grass-grown graves and its roof of gray sky, of the pale, silent girl and brown old Marie in her trim skirts and white cap talking and nodding unheeded.

In the afternoon Mr. Graham called on Mrs. Scot. Mrs. Scot received him kindly, and regretted that her daughter was not at home. But, perhaps, Mr. Graham would do them the favor of taking a dish of tea with them that evening, when Mrs. Scot's daughter would certainly be within, and they would all unite their efforts in persuading him to remain, and thereby leave them dear Mrs. Graham, at least, a few days longer. All this Mrs. Scot said very graciously. She guessed that William Lennard would come in that evening. She was not sorry to stimulate him with the presence of his predecessor. It would also do Mr. Graham good—he had always been conceited—to find that Lily had found a comforter. Mr. Graham accepted the invitation. It was a great weakness, surely. He had called on Mrs. Scot as politeness required, but what need was there to see Lily again? and yet he yielded to temptation, declaring to his own thoughts that, though the interview might lead to some pain, it would be unmanly of him to shrink from it.

And so in the evening that door, the threshold of which he had thought never to cross again, opened for him. Once more he saw that drawing-room to which the presence of Lily Scot had given its charm. And she was there again—sweet, fair, gentle as ever! Jane and Louisa had shot up into tall, demure girls, but their elder sister was unaltered. Neither time nor sorrow had dimmed her eyes nor faded her cheek nor changed her smile. With a little blush she held out her hand and welcomed him who had been her betrothed husband. She did not look annoyed, but neither did she look glad. Lily was too self-possessed, too lady-like, to betray either feeling; she was courteous and friendly, that was all. Indeed, the blush we have recorded, and which made Edward Graham's heart leap as he noticed it, was so evanescent that his own emotion quickly subsided. "It was the lamplight that deceived me," he thought; "it is all over for her—better so—yes, better so."

No doubt it was better—but better is not always pleasant; and Mr. Graham was just a little hurt at Lily's self-

possession, though he did his best to emulate it. The party was not a lively one. Mrs. Graham had gone to bed with a bad headache, but still persisted in her resolve of going away with her nephew the next day. This Mrs. Scot chose to resent as an unpardonable wrong. Her displeasure, however, had another cause. William Lennard was not coming, and would not be stimulated by Edward Graham, nor give the said Edward the lesson in humility he so sadly needed. That he might not lose, however, the entire benefit of the young man's devotion to her daughter, Mrs. Scot took care to wonder at his absence.

"I thought William said last night he would be sure to come," she remarked, rather severely.

Lily, who was pouring out Mr. Graham's tea—never did cup of tea taste more unpalatable than this—answered with great composure:

"He cannot come, mamma; his uncle wants him."

"Just like his perversity," said Mrs. Scot, shutting her eyes with the resignation of a martyr.

Tea was barely over when Mrs. Petherick came in, lively as ever, and breathless with news.

"And have you really been taking your tea in that quiet fashion, when all Saint Aubin is in a turmoil?" she exclaimed, sinking down on a chair and clasping her hands in amazement.

"News!—what news?" asked Mrs. Scot, with sudden liveliness.

"I thought to find Captain Jekyll here, telling you all about it. I suppose he is at the Randolphs'."

"Well, but what news?" asked Mrs. Scot, tartly.

"Oh! about that unfortunate child, of course. Instead of being overwhelmed with grief, as one would suppose, little Miss Bertram has displayed the most terrible temper. I hear that she actually clung to the door-posts as she cried, 'I will not leave my house—I will not leave it—never!—never!' 'Come along, Miss Jones,' says Mr. Lennard—'no nonsense, you must come and live with me now, you know. I am your guardain, Miss Jones.' 'I am Miss Bertram, not Miss Jones,' says the young lady, drawing herself up, 'and I will die before I go and live with you—you bad man, who broke dear papa's heart!' 'Your papa, Miss Jones, had complaint of the heart, Miss Jones,' retorts Mr.

Lennard. He *is* spiteful, I must say. 'It was in the Jones family, no doubt, and what have I, who am not a Jones, to do with that?' And, when Mr. Lennard added in his wicked way, 'Don't make me take you away by force,' little Miss Bertram, or Miss Jones—I am sure I don't know which to call her—turned as white as a ghost, and followed him without a word."

"Poor child!" said Lily Scot, gently.

"Mr. Lennard is a horrid bear!" cried Mrs. Scot, with evident temper; "and I wish that Mr. Bertram—well, Sarah, what is it?"

The question was put to Sarah Webster, who stood in the door with tragedy in her sallow face.

"If you please, ma'am, Miss Bertram would like to speak to you. She won't come in; but she would like to speak to you."

"The little unfortunate has run away!" cried Mrs. Petherick, turning up her eyes and raising her hands.

"Tell Miss Bertram that I am going up to her presently," answered Mrs. Scot, with a look of much dignity; "and take her up a cup of tea in my room, nurse."

"My dear Mrs. Scot, you will get yourself in a mess with Mr. Lennard," said Mrs. Petherick.

"My dear Mrs. Petherick," austerely replied Mrs. Scot, rising from the sofa and sailing to the door, "Mr. Lennard may lock up his ward if he pleases. I shall not shut my door on Mr. Bertram's daughter."

A cruel alternative now lay before Mrs. Petherick. Should she go and spread this last fresh bit of news, or wait for more? If she went she would certainly forestall Captain Jekyll. If she waited she might lose that chance; but then she would also learn a great deal which she could never learn so well otherwise. The advantage of waiting was too great. Mrs. Petherick remained.

No one spoke much till Mrs. Scot returned; Jane and Louisa exchanged uneasy whispers; Mrs. Petherick uttered a word now and then, and nodded more than she spoke; and Edward Graham looked at Lily, who gazed pensively before her, and seemed to have forgotten him. And yet her eyes lit softly, and—he was sure of it—her cheek flushed, as a man's voice mingled with her mother's nigh the parlor-door; but, when that door opened, and Mrs. Scot came in, followed

by William Lennard, Lily was herself again, and she greeted the visitor with the cold gentleness which she gave to all.

"Very well, William, tell Mr. Lennard that he may come if he pleases," remarked Mrs. Scot, as she walked back to her sofa with much stateliness. "Miss Bertram is here. I do not deny it. She is lying down in my room—very much exhausted, poor little thing! I shall never close my door against her father's child, William!"

William Lennard heard Mrs. Scot with a lowering aspect which did not improve his good looks. He darted an angry glance at Mr. Graham, as if he held him responsible for all this, and replied, with decided ill-humor:

"Well, look you here, Mrs. Scot. What right has the little monkey to run away from us? I staid at home this evening to keep her company, and she went up to her room and gave us the slip."

"She came to her father's friend," said Mrs. Scot, still dignified.

Perhaps it was to create a diversion that Lily Scot here asked William if he would have some tea; but, with another irate look at Mr. Graham, as if to say, "I will have no tea, because he has had some," the young man uttered an ungracious "No, thank you;" adding, in the same breath:

"I made her tea myself, and she would not touch it—bad-tempered little thing!"

"She never could bear you, William," mischievously put in Jane.

"Then there's no love lost between us," said William, turning scarlet. "A little set-up thing. She can be nice, no one nicer, but she is as proud as Lucifer! And yet, for all uncle could say or do, I would not call her Jones. Ungrateful monkey!"

"You always were fond of her," persisted Jane, demurely.

William shot an angry look at her.

"I—I fond of her?" said he, stammering with annoyance. "What do you mean?"

"Nothing," interrupted Lily Scot, a little dryly, and she looked severely at her sister, who was silenced.

Mr. Graham rose. He felt sadly out of place. He could not but see that William Lennard's good or ill humor seemed more to Lily Scot now than his presence. It might

be just, nay, it might be desirable; but, when he remembered the secret hope with which he had come to Saint Aubin, it was hard. So he took his leave of them all coldly enough, till Lily Scot, looking at him with sudden softness, said gently: "Will you not stay? Perhaps Mrs. Graham will come down presently. And shall we not see you again to-morrow?" she timidly added.

"Oh! certainly," he replied, relenting at once, and hoping that Mrs. Scot would say something to detain him; but Mrs. Scot, who did not like her daughter's gentle and friendly manner, was coldly silent. Indeed, as soon as the door of the parlor had closed upon him, she exclaimed, a little crossly:

"I never did see a man so altered as Mr. Graham!"

"He is quite old," assented Mrs. Petherick.

"I wonder what brought him to Saint Aubin?" grumbled William Lennard, ill-temperedly. "I don't suppose any one wanted him."

Mrs. Graham's sudden entrance put an end to all comments.

"What! he's gone!" she cried; adding, with her usual candor, "and it was for him I came down."

"Nurse can soon overtake and bring him back," said Lily Scot, with what William considered very unnecessary alacrity.

Edward Graham had almost reached the limits of the Haute-ville when Lily's gypsy-looking nurse overtook him, and delivered his aunt's message. He turned back willingly enough, hoping to see Lily's face once more, and he was certainly disappointed when he was shown into the dining-room, where Mrs. Graham sat waiting for him alone.

"My dear boy," said she, as soon as she saw him, "I could not sleep without telling you. Shut the door, and don't breathe a word of it. Little Lily Bertram wants to run away to England with me."

"Impossible!" said Edward Graham, with a start of surprise.

"My dear Ned, she has just been in my room, and coaxed and prayed till—till I have a great mind to do it."

"Aunt, you surely would not!"

Mr. Graham loved the law. *Dura lex sed lex* was his creed. Mr. Lennard was Miss Bertram's guardian, and she must submit to his authority.

"But he is such a wicked man, and she is such a darling," argued Mrs. Graham, with tears in her eyes. "And Miss Cowper, it seems, would receive her at landing; she showed me the letter. It was her father's wish, Ned."

But Mr. Graham was obdurate. He felt for Lily Bertram, and shared his aunt's sympathy; but, if Mrs. Graham wanted his advice, he could only say, "Leave Miss Bertram where she is." Mrs. Graham heard him irresolute and perplexed. "The poor child had begged so hard," she reasoned, looking up in Edward Graham's face, "and it would be so easy. They could leave to-morrow early, and, long before Mr. Lennard would know the truth, Miss Bertram would be out of his reach." And, while she pleaded, and he resisted, the drama of little Lily Bertram's fate was progressing rapidly.

Mrs. Petherick's hope of learning a good deal by remaining at Mrs. Scot's was doomed to disappointment. She was in the front box, indeed, but she could not be behind the scenes. She could not hear or see all that was said and done. Scarcely was Mrs. Graham closeted with her nephew when Mr. Lennard came bouncing into the house, and, giving Sarah Webster, who let him in, one of his sharpest and angriest looks, authoritatively bade her send down Miss Jones to him.

"Perhaps you will speak to missis first, sir," said Sarah, coolly; "she is in the dining-room; or would you like going up to Mrs. Scot's boudoir and seeing her there alone?"

Her manner was almost aggressive, and, though Mr. Lennard chafed under it, he would show no temper, but said that he would see Mrs. Scot alone.

Mrs. Scot's boudoir was a closet-like room, which might have dispensed with so euphemious an appellation. Mr. Lennard stared around him with contempt, kicked a footstool out of his way, flung himself down with all his might in a brittle chair, and sneered at a feeble view of Mrs. Scot's brother's house in Torquay, which happened to be hanging on the wall before him. But these signs of petty malice vanished when Mrs. Scot entered the room, and greeted him with an air of weariness and fatigue, destined to impress on Mr. Lennard the fact that he was not a welcome visitor. Mr. Lennard, however, was all airy lightness and good-humor.

"Well, Mrs. Scot," said he, "you have my ward, it

seems. I need not tell you"—he laid his finger to his nose—"that you cannot keep Miss Jones."

"I do not keep Miss Bertram," replied Mrs. Scot, without sitting down; "but she came here, and she shall stay here as long as she pleases. Of course, if you take her away by force, Mr. Lennard, I cannot prevent you."

Mr. Lennard felt the lady's supercilious, not to say impertinent, tone; but, though a sour and ill-tempered man, he knew how to practise self-control, and he had resolved that Mrs. Scot should be made subservient to his ends.

"Come, Mrs. Scot," said he, roundly, "we cannot carry on matters so, you and I—we can't, you know. I want the child, because I am responsible for her. The whole world is welcome to see what I do with her, and when Miss Scot comes and gives her her lessons—"

"Her lessons, Mr. Lennard!—I don't understand."

"Didn't I say it at once? Why, of course, Mrs. Scot, *I* can't do without Miss Scot to manage that girl."

Mr. Lennard knew what a loss that of Lily Bertram's teaching had been to the Scots; but Miss Scot's mother scorned the bait, and said, coldly, that Mr. Lennard was very kind, but that her daughter, she thought, had something else in view.

"There never was anything like women," emphatically said Lily's guardian. "Here am I, all for peace; and here you are, all for war! Now, just listen to reason. How can you and I not be friends, when a nephew of mine, who shall be nameless, is hankering after your daughter?"

"What nephew, Mr. Lennard?" austerely asked Mrs. Scot.

"I said he should be nameless," was the dry answer. "Of one thing you may be sure—he is desperately in love; and if—yes, if money it be that stops him, why, Mrs. Scot, *I* will mend that."

This was plain speaking, and Mrs. Scot, though she would have liked to know whether Mr. Lennard meant Dick Cowper or William Lennard, was greatly mollified by the overture, and said, mildly enough:

"Well, Mr. Lennard, what do you want me to do?"

"Simply to have no underhand dealings with my ward."

"But, Mr. Lennard," said Mrs. Scot, sitting down, "I have no underhand dealings with poor little Miss Jones.

The child came here, and could not be turned out in the street, surely. She is asleep now, but you can have her to-morrow."

"I will have Miss Jones to-night," said Mr. Lennard, setting his teeth.

"Well, then, Mr. Lennard," answered the lady, with unexpected temper, "you must go into my room and get her yourself."

Mr. Lennard looked as if, but for shame, he would take Mrs. Scot at her word. Lily was only a girl, but she had defied him, and he had resolved that he would break the spirit he could not bend.

"Have your way, Mrs. Scot," he said—"have your way. The ball is at your feet. Don't take it up—don't. Forget what I said about my nephew, and so forth. Have your way, and keep Miss Jones till I send for her."

"I have no wish to assist rebellion and give a bad example to my own children," said Mrs. Scot, virtuously; "and, since you are bent on having Miss Jones to-night, I will go and waken her myself, Mr. Lennard. I have no doubt she will be amenable to reason."

"I dare say she will," said Mr. Lennard, with a grim chuckle.

Some people seem born to be sovereigns, so incapable are they to dispense with a prime-minister. Mrs. Scot could not do without Sarah Webster, and, on leaving Mr. Lennard, summoned her faithful counselor to a private conference, which was carried on in the kitchen, for want of a safer place. Sarah heard her mistress out in silence; then her black eyes sparkled as she said:

"And is Miss Lily to marry Mr. Cowper? And is he to have Mr. Lennard's money?"

"How can I tell?" pettishly expostulated Mrs. Scot. "I thought you would know. And there's that Mr. Graham come back, and Lily as civil to him as can be."

"Drat him!" said Sarah, with a darkening face. "He went away once, and I know how my dear young lady fretted. What brings him back?—to send others away."

"He is leaving to-morrow; and then, nurse, I fancy Lily cares more for William Lennard than for any one else."

"That boy!" exclaimed Sarah, with a scorn which would have done Edward Graham's heart good. "But, perhaps, it

is he who is to get the money," she said, her dark face lighting.

Again Mrs. Scot pettishly asked how she should know.

"Well, it's one of the two," said Sarah, nodding. "Unless Mr. Lennard tells you which, don't you mind him, ma'am."

"Well, but, nurse, he also says that Lily is to go back and teach little Miss Jones, and I don't like to lose that," said Mrs. Scot, who could be perfectly candid when she was driven to the wall.

Sarah tightened her thin lips. She knew, no one better, how hard a trial the loss of Miss Bertram's teaching had been to the family. She had never forgiven Mr. Bertram for having presumed to dispense with Miss Scot's services, and she was quite willing to hold Miss Bertram responsible for her father's sin, and sacrifice her without remorse. Moreover, she, too, knew that Mr. Lennard wanted more than to prevail over Miss Bertram. He wanted Saint Aubin back again, and, if the man were managed well, he would give Miss Scot one of his nephews—no matter which—to gain his end. Yes, the man was in their power now; they had him, they could play on his passions and weaknesses as on a well-tuned instrument. Sarah almost laughed as she saw it all so clear before her.

"Well, ma'am," she said, "Mr. Lennard wants Miss Bertram, and Miss Bertram won't go to him; is that it?"

Mrs. Scot supposed so, but at the same time she looked so helpless that Sarah at once volunteered to manage Miss Bertram.

"Do, nurse," said Mrs. Scot, relieved; "my nerves can't stand it. And take her to Mr. Lennard in my boudoir, please, nurse."

On leaving Mrs. Graham, Lily had stolen back to Mrs. Scot's room, and, sitting down on a chair nigh the bed, laid her head on the pillow. With the credulousness and inexperience of youth, she thought that Mrs. Scot would keep her for that night, at least; that Mrs. Graham would abet her escape, and that she would be out of Mr. Lennard's power the next morning. It was hard to leave Saint Aubin and her father's grave and her own house, and to go to a strange or at least an unknown country, and live there for three weary years, but anything was to be borne rather than

to live with Mr. Lennard, be called Miss Jones, and be taunted all the day long.

"And yet how I shall long to come back," thought Lily, her tears flowing; "how my first act will be to place dear papa with his parents in the old abbey, to get Mr. Graham to design his monument, and—who knows?—to rebuild the turret! I know he would have wished it—dear, dear papa!"

Her tears fell faster and faster at the thought. Her grief was still in that phase in which the hopeful spirit of youth strives in vain against the sense of irremediable loss, and yet the thought of all she would accomplish in the future took something away from the bitterness of the present.

"Not asleep, Miss Lily," said Sarah, coming in and speaking briskly; "that's right. Mr. Lennard's waiting for you. I said you would soon be ready."

Lily lifted up her head from the pillow and gave her a scared look.

"I will not go with Mr. Lennard," said she, brusquely; "and Mrs. Scot said I need not unless I liked."

"Mrs. Scot can't help herself, miss," sharply replied Sarah; "she can't keep you against Mr. Lennard's will."

"And has she sent you with that message?" asked Lily, indignantly.

"Why not?"

"Has she not dared to deliver it herself?" persisted Lily. "Oh! I would die before I would tell a servant to say that which I was ashamed to speak!"

No Bertram could have uttered this with a greater scorn of Mrs. Scot's cowardice.

"You had better come down, miss," said Sarah, grimly.

Lily would not deign to argue. She gathered her autumn cloak around her long, slender figure, and left the room without uttering a word. Sarah turned to the boudoir, but Mr. Lennard had already left it, and Miss Scot, whom her mother had sent up to him, was there alone. She gave a guilty start on seeing Lily Bertram, but tried to say, quietly:

"Mr. Lennard is already below. Take heart, my dear. I shall go in very early to you to-morrow. Good-night."

She wanted to kiss her, but Lily drew back from her and looked in her face.

"And have you, too, sold me?" she asked. "O Lily, Lily!"

She could say no more; and more Miss Scot did not wait to hear.

"You are excitable to-night, Lily," she said; "you will be more reasonable to-morrow." And she went down as she spoke.

"Lily!" said Lily Bertram, pitifully, "Lily, come back and stand by me!"

But Miss Scot turned a deaf ear to the prayer. She went down swiftly, without looking back.

"The traitress!" said Lily Bertram, in a low tone; "but Mr. Lennard may bring her to me as much as he likes, never —never will I learn a word from her, the traitress!".

"You little brat!" exclaimed Sarah, with suppressed passion, all the vulgar violence of her nature roused at this defiance, "how dare you speak so of my young lady?"

"She is no lady," answered Lily, full of scorn—"no, she is no lady."

"If you don't hold your tongue, I'll give you such a shake as you will remember," said Sarah, speaking low, but coming nigh her and looking venomous. "You—you Jones you!" She hurled the name at her as if it had been a murderous weapon. She had forgotten the very cause she wished to serve in the fury which possessed her, and she looked so fierce and fell that Lily shrank from her with mingled disgust and fear.

"If you attempt to touch me, I shall jump out of that window," said she, with her hand on the hasp of the landing window by which she was standing.

Sarah calmed down, and burst into a loud, hysterical laugh.

"Hoity-toity!" said she; "all I want is that you should come down to Mr. Lennard, who is waiting below; and the stairs will surely do as well as the window."

Lily did not answer. She was conquered, and she knew it. She passed by Sarah with a proud and steady step, submitting in silence. The victory was won, but at a dearer cost than Sarah knew. As Lily reached the foot of the stairs, the door of the little room where Mrs. Graham and her nephew had been talking together opened, and Edward Graham appeared on the threshold. The light from within fell on him. Lily went up to him and held out her hand.

"Good-night, Mr. Graham," she said, with a wistful look.

"Every one is forsaking and betraying me—even Lily, whom I so loved. I am Miss Jones for them now; and Mrs. Scot sent up her servant to turn me out of the house, and Lily had not a kind word to say to me when I called her back. It was hard, Mr. Graham!"

"Come, Miss Jones, no tragedy nonsense," said Mr. Lennard, who was waiting for her by the gate under the archway.

"But you—you," said Lily, in a broken voice—"you who have so lost through my house—you have been always kind, Mr. Graham, and God bless you!"

She dropped his hand and turned away before he could answer.

"Take my arm," whispered a rough but not unkind voice behind her.

It was William Lennard who spoke. Lily shook her head, but, when he took and slipped her arm within his, she did not withdraw it. The gate opened. Mr. Lennard went out first, his nephew and Lily followed. The gate closed upon them again. Mr. Lennard had gone off with his prey.

"It is just heart-breaking, that's all," said Mrs. Graham, whose ready tears were flowing down her cheeks.

The parlor-door opened, and Mrs. Scot's voice called out, very crossly:

"Nurse, is that Miss Jones gone?"

Sarah, who had remained up-stairs, did not answer; but Mr. Graham, coming forward, said, as he entered the parlor:

"Miss Bertram is gone, madam."

The gravity of his look and aspect conveyed a rebuke.

"Sir," said Mrs. Scot, starting up from the sofa in much wrath, and pouring on his devoted head all the irritation which had been gathering within her during this trying evening—"sir, I beg to inform you that I know best by what name I am to designate that young lady."

"Besides," quietly said Lily Scot, who was secretly incensed at William Lennard's desertion, "Jones is her real name, poor child."

"Would you call her so if her father lived?" asked Edward Graham, point-blank.

"Mr. Graham," said Lily Scot, flushing red, "you forget

yourself." And she rose and, with her hand leaning on the back of her chair, looked proudly in his face.

He looked back at her, while the room was suddenly still.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and bowed, and turned away, and felt, as he turned and walked into the street, "She is cold as ice, and she never liked me, never—never!"

CHAPTER XXX.

It seemed now to Edward Graham that all was fairly over between him and Saint Aubin; that he had only to close the book of his life at that page, and read this sad chapter of disappointed love and ambition no more. But for his aunt he would have left this ill-fated Norman town that very night. As he walked down the street he brooded bitterly over his once-adored Lily's fickleness. She actually liked that sailor. Her unkindness to Miss Bertram Mr. Graham could have forgiven, but how could he forgive her this? With the intuition of jealousy he felt that Miss Scot had accepted him formerly as the most eligible suitor, that on the same principle she would have taken Dick Cowper if she could have got him, but that the real preference of her heart was for William Lennard, the awkward, bearish, ill-mannered youth.

"And I thought she cared for me!" he laughed to himself, with bitter scorn.

Mr. Graham was walking fast, for bitter thoughts urge a man on, when a hand was laid on his arm, and a sharp, irritable voice addressed him with—

"Mr. Graham, a word with you, if you please?"

The young man turned round and recognized Mr. Lennard. He had never liked the man, and now he almost loathed him. He would have liked to shake him off like a noxious insect, but the habitual courtesies of life checked the impulse, and he stood still and waited, with a cold, forbidding aspect, for which Mr. Lennard, to do him justice, cared naught.

"Mr. Graham, you mean to go to-morrow, I am told. Take my advice, stay here and try your chance. Don't stare, man. Monsieur Duhamel, the architect, died three days ago. You have but to step into his shoes; they will fit you—take my word for it."

Surprise at so unexpected a proposal kept Edward Graham mute. Mr. Lennard had always been odd, but this seemed more than mere eccentricity.

"Thank you, Mr. Lennard," he said, dryly, "but Monsieur Duhamel's shoes may remain empty for me."

Mr. Lennard laughed a little, short laugh.

"London's a fine place for those who have a name and can make money in it; but it is a very poor place for those who have to fight their way up the ladder. Here's a ready-made chance for you, Mr. Graham. If you kick it away, it may never come back. Monsieur Duhamel died rather suddenly; he left neither son nor nephew to fill his place. You have but to step in and take it."

Mr. Graham's dark eyes flashed fire.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, with ill-subdued anger, "have I asked you to meddle in my concerns, and tell me what chances I am to take?"

"You certainly have not," answered Mr. Lennard, chuckling.

"Then," said the young man, hotly, "take it for granted that I do not require your advice. I have the honor to wish you a good-evening."

He was walking on, but Mr. Lennard's grasp, which was always like that of a vice, arrested him. He could have freed himself, indeed, but the man, though hateful, was twenty years his elder, and there was no unmanly violence in Edward Graham's nature.

"Well, sir?" he said, sharply and imperatively.

"Well, sir, you are a very impatient young man," was the cool answer. "If you will engage to stay here in Saint Aubin, fill Monsieur Duhamel's vacant place, and settle down, in short, I will give you ten thousand francs out of Miss Jones's property as compensation for your former loss, and without your foregoing any further claim on that young lady when she comes of age."

This time Mr. Graham felt—not surprise—but amazement.

yourself." And she rose and, with her hand leaning on the back of her chair, looked proudly in his face.

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"Mr. Graham, a word with you, if you please?"

The young man turned round and recognized Mr. Lennard. He had never liked the man, and now he almost loathed him. He would have liked to shake him off like a noxious insect, but the habitual courtesies of life checked the impulse, and he stood still and waited, with a cold, forbidding aspect, for which Mr. Lennard, to do him justice, cared naught.

"Mr. Graham, you mean to go to-morrow, I am told. Take my advice, stay here and try your chance. Don't stare, man. Monsieur Duhamel, the architect, died three days ago. You have but to step into his shoes; they will fit you—take my word for it."

Surprise at so unexpected a proposal kept Edward Graham mute. Mr. Lennard had always been odd, but this seemed more than mere eccentricity.

"Thank you, Mr. Lennard," he said, dryly, "but Monsieur Duhamel's shoes may remain empty for me."

Mr. Lennard laughed a little, short laugh.

"London's a fine place for those who have a name and can make money in it; but it is a very poor place for those who have to fight their way up the ladder. Here's a ready-made chance for you, Mr. Graham. If you kick it away, it may never come back. Monsieur Duhamel died rather suddenly; he left neither son nor nephew to fill his place. You have but to step in and take it."

Mr. Graham's dark eyes flashed fire.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, with ill-subdued anger, "have I asked you to meddle in my concerns, and tell me what chances I am to take?"

"You certainly have not," answered Mr. Lennard, chuckling.

"Then," said the young man, hotly, "take it for granted that I do not require your advice. I have the honor to wish you a good-evening."

He was walking on, but Mr. Lennard's grasp, which was always like that of a vice, arrested him. He could have freed himself, indeed, but the man, though hateful, was twenty years his elder, and there was no unmanly violence in Edward Graham's nature.

"Well, sir?" he said, sharply and imperatively.

"Well, sir, you are a very impatient young man," was the cool answer. "If you will engage to stay here in Saint Aubin, fill Monsieur Duhamel's vacant place, and settle down, in short, I will give you ten thousand francs out of Miss Jones's property as compensation for your former loss, and without your foregoing any further claim on that young lady when she comes of age."

This time Mr. Graham felt—not surprise—but amazement.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, point-blank, "you must have a motive in this. What is it?"

"Find it out," answered Mr. Lennard, with that ill-tempered rudeness which marred all his scheming. "Of course, I have a motive," he added, in a more amiable tone. "You were wronged, Mr. Graham, in that matter of the turret. No more now than then would I allow that you had a claim on my ward's property for your full loss; but ten thousand francs—four hundred pounds—Miss Jones can afford; and this, added to the late Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, may be the making of you yet."

Mr. Graham laughed bitterly.

"Mr. Lennard, do you know what my losses in that matter of the turret come to?" he asked.

"My good sir, where is the use of reckoning the cost of spilled milk?" was the calm reply. "Here are four hundred pounds and Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, and you can take and leave them at your pleasure. You will make up your mind, I dare say."

And, without waiting for an answer, Mr. Lennard walked away.

No man could receive two such proposals as those Mr. Lennard had just made to Edward Graham without attempting to fathom that gentleman's motives; and these were not very hard to discover after all. It was not from justice, though tardy, that Lily's guardian wanted to give the young man four hundred pounds of Lily's money. If he parted with a little, it was to secure the whole the more surely. If he brought back Edward Graham to the place where his first love still dwelt, it was to keep his own nephew away from her. William Lennard was in love with Lily Scot, no doubt, but he was fond of Lily Bertram, too. His temper was shy, jealous, and sulky; already Mr. Graham's mere presence in Mrs. Scot's house had exasperated him. If the young architect settled down in Saint Aubin, Mr. Lennard knew that William would never strive with him for Lily Scot's affections. He would fear defeat too much to enter on the contest. And then, of course, he would turn to Lily Bertram, and she did not dislike him; and how could she help herself?

As to Lily Scot, whether she married Edward Graham, or Dick Cowper, or no one at all—what did Mr. Lennard

care? She was in his way, and she must get out of it, and all that was worth four hundred pounds.

The weak point in the armor of all schemers is that their imagination and their desires mislead them too constantly. They are short-sighted and self-absorbed, and take into no account the uncertain tempers and changing moods of the men and women on whom they mean to act. Lily Scot was offended with Mr. Graham, and Mr. Graham was angry with Lily Scot. Neither now wished for the other, and, when the young man guessed that the purpose Mr. Lennard had in drawing him to Saint Aubin was to use him as a scarecrow, his rage was great. No, not for ten thousand francs, nor yet ten times ten thousand, would he abet that archtraitor. Let his nephew marry that false Lily—what did he, Edward Graham, care? So spake Anger in her first fume, but second thoughts told another tale. Four hundred pounds! The sum was a large one to him, and the money was his, only a fragment of his great loss; and then his prospects in England were poor enough—his foot was still on the lowest rung of the ladder, and he saw few chances of getting up higher for many a year to come. What though Mr. Lennard's motives were interested and mean, the opening he had laid before the young man's view might be a good one. Once Edward Graham had thought that the turret of Mr. Bertram's house was his great chance; now, as he cooled down from his first anger, he asked himself if Monsieur Duhamel's empty shoes, as Mr. Lennard so significantly called that deceased gentleman's vacant place, might not be the crowning chance of his life. He tried to solve the problem of his fate. Four hundred pounds, a chance of making his way in life, the certainty of punishing Lily Scot by convincing her of his indifference, were all Mr. Graham saw in Mr. Lennard's proposal; but that all was much, and only one question remained: How far had that schemer spoken the truth, and how was he, Edward Graham, to know it?

"He will tell me," thought Edward Graham, as, entering the Cité de Jérusalem, he suddenly caught sight in the sitting-room on the ground-floor of Monsieur Merle's fresh face. That honest face lit up with gladness as its owner saw the young man. The builder rose, and came forward with an outstretched hand, whose grasp was cordially returned. Race, speech, eduction, birth, and those acquired feelings which be-

come so subtile a part of our being, all divided the middle-aged builder from the young architect, but each recognized in the other what each valued himself most for being—in truth, in courage, and in honor, in the very highest meaning of the word, a man.

"It does me good to see you, Monsieur Graham," said Monsieur Merle, who did, indeed, look delighted. "I warned my wife that I would spend the night here rather than miss you. 'Do,' said she; 'spend two, three nights, if you please, but see Monsieur Graham, whatever you do.' And here I am," added Monsieur Merle, with a happy laugh, as, their first greeting over, he followed Mr. Graham up to his room.

The pleasure of meeting again was more than what they had to say to each other. Monsieur Merle, indeed, who was communicative, related the history of the last baby at full length; but, when he had done this, and informed Mr. Graham that Laurent—that good-for-nothing fellow—had come to a bad end, and been sent to Cayenne, and alluded to Mr. Bertram's death, his topics of discourse were exhausted. Edward Graham, who was always reticent, made few comments on Monsieur Merle's communications, and abstained from entering on the trying subject of his prospects in England; but, at the same time, he related to him, without a moment's hesitation, the singular conversation which had just taken place between himself and Mr. Lennard. "And now, Monsieur Merle," added he, by way of conclusion, "what do you consider the value of Mr. Lennard's proposal to be?"

Perplexity and surprise appeared on the builder's honest face.

"Monsieur Graham," said he, "I do not understand it. I know that Monsieur Duhamel's sister was Monsieur Lennard's second wife, and I suppose he has something to do with his affairs. I know, too, that Monsieur Duhamel, being alone here—Monsieur Gentil failed, you know—made money, though he was not a clever man, not fit to tie your shoe-strings, Monsieur Graham; but I never had any dealings with Monsieur Lennard; and you know more about him than I do," he added, with a wistful look full in Edward Graham's face.

The young man smiled.

"Yes, Monsieur Merle," said he, "I know too much about him, and I will have nothing to do with it."

"Monsieur Duhamel's business was a good one—a very good one," meditatively said Monsieur Merle.

"But his shoes are not for my wear," said Edward Graham, carelessly; "thank you, Monsieur Merle."

"Well, I must go," said the builder, rising. "I am glad to have seen you again, Monsieur Graham; and, if you should change your mind about that business, remember that I should be glad to pay back a good turn, and that, should you need help or advice, Jean Merle would be there."

He spoke very earnestly. Very cordially did Edward Graham thank him—and thus they parted.

"The man means it, for he is true; and I dare say it would be a good thing enough; but have aught to do with that traitor—never—never!"

The very next morning brought, however, so complete a revulsion of feeling, that Edward Graham's stern "Never" was canceled with a sigh.

Captain Jekyll spent an hour every morning in the reading-rooms of Saint Aubin, and thither Mr. Graham repaired, after having received two letters—one a brief note from his aunt, begging of him to wait another day for her, as she had a bad cold and could not travel; and the other from Mr. Blake, informing him that he was going to the Continent, and must postpone till his return those alterations in Blake House which he (Mr. Blake) and Mr. Graham had begun a few weeks ago. But Mr. Blake did not expect to be more than some months away, and would have much pleasure to resume the matter on his return in the spring.

"I know what that means," thought poor Edward Graham, as he folded up the letter with a weary sigh. "Johnson, or Thomson, or Robertson has got the job, and I am thrown over. Oh! to have a fair chance here, anywhere, and to be once more wanted rather than wanting!"

In this mood—a favorable one to Mr. Lennard's proposal—Edward Graham sought Captain Jekyll, or, to speak more correctly, more information.

Captain Jekyll's delight at being sought out was excessive, and his zeal at giving knowledge as boundless as that knowledge itself seemed to be unlimited. He roared at Mr. Graham, he rolled his goggle-eyes at him, he held him fast while he told him of Monsieur Duhamel's illness, decease, and burial. The captain knew to a T what Monsieur Duhamel

had left, and what his heiresses, all female relatives on his late sister's side, meant to do with the money. That Monsieur Duhamel had died worth a handsome sum, and that he had left neither relation, nor friend, nor pupil, to take up his professional inheritance, seemed positive, from the captain's account.

"And you ought to come back to Saint Aubin and fill the poor devil's place," roared the captain along the quay, to which Edward Graham had thought it prudent to lure him for this conversation. "By Jove! you ought, sir," said the captain, shaking his stick at the shipping. "Mind my words, sir, you'll do it, you will, and marry Lily Scot, as true as my name is Jekyll. Ha! ha!"

"Is not Miss Scot going to marry Mr. Lennard's nephew?" asked Mr. Graham, with much seeming unconcern.

"That fine girl marry that boy!" said the captain, with a look of contempt. "Sir, I will marry her myself rather than allow it. No, no; the young fellow is sweet upon her, and she likes it—they all do—but Lily will never marry that young, awkward tar, sir—never! Mark my words, sir, never!"

A good deal more Captain Jekyll said. The man's word was worth very little; he was a braggart, and by no means trustworthy, and yet he helped to turn the balance in favor of Mr. Lennard's proposal, and, when Edward Graham left him and went back to the Cité de Jérusalem, he asked himself by what foolish scruple he had ever hesitated about the matter. The four hundred pounds were his. He did not wrong Mr. Bertram's orphan child by taking back that sum from her guardian. Let Mr. Lennard's motives be mean and unworthy, could he not defeat them? Was he not resolved, determined—as determined as man could be—to give up all thought of Lily Scot? Mr. Lennard's nephew might marry her if he pleased, or Captain Jekyll, or any one who liked. But, resolved though the young man might be, he gave a little start when he found Mr. Lennard waiting for him, and sitting in his Louis Quinze chair with his stick between his knees, and his chin resting on the carved grinning head that adorned it.

"Your servant, Mr. Graham," said he, without rising—"come to know your decision."

All Edward Graham's dislike for that man, all his re-

membrance of the bitter wrong he had endured at his hands, rose within him at the sight of his face, at the sound of his voice. He could not prevent his look from growing forbidding and stern, his manner from becoming sharp, mistrustful, and aggressive.

"Mr. Lennard," he said, "I remember the past too well not to feel that you have some motive of your own for offering me money, and, if all turns out well, a position. What that motive is I may guess, but do not choose to say."

Mr. Lennard nodded, shut his eyes, and drew down the corners of his mouth, as much as to say, "Then don't, my dear fellow—don't say anything at all about it."

"But I warn you," resumed the young man, exasperated at his insolent manner, "that, so far as I am concerned, your motive will be defeated. I will take the four hundred pounds because the money is mine; I will take the late Monsieur Duhamel's position because I choose to do so; but I will give you thanks for neither, and in no manner will I abet your schemes against the late Mr. Bertram's child. I will be neither your ally nor your accomplice."

Mr. Lennard nodded again, and, opening his eyes, said, coolly:

"You will take the four hundred pounds, set up in Saint Aubin, and engage to stay here two years."

"Why two years?" asked Edward Graham, sharply.

"Because I do not choose that you should go off at the end of six months. Silence means consent—eh? Well, we can go round to Monsieur Duhamel's house and give it a look. I am authorized by my late wife's nieces to let it be furnished at a fair price, which you, I suppose, will be willing to give. The house is large for a bachelor, but that lies with you, Mr. Graham."

He looked at Edward Graham, who uttered no denial. And so it was decided, and, like one in a dream, the young man followed his visitor down-stairs.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THUS did the wayward breath of fate seem to drift once more the fortunes of Edward Graham toward the shores of Saint Aubin. He yielded to circumstances, but he did so without fear or regret, with something, indeed, of a vanquished man's eagerness to fight over again the old battle on the old battle-field, where he had been so cruelly and so unjustly defeated. In his heart he found that he panted for that revenge of success which is so dear to wounded pride, and which, alas! is so rare in the experience of the unfortunate. To fall once seems to doom a man to fall again and again; to fail in the beginning is like taking a lease of many a bitter defeat. But Edward Graham was still young and sanguine, and he neither could nor would doubt that he should succeed in the end. Scarcely exchanging a word, the two men walked through the Basse-ville to the late Monsieur Duhamel's villa. It stood on the outskirts of the town, with a pleasant flower-garden in front, and a green orchard behind, a cheerful abode, but scarcely one in which a young man would care to live alone.

Mr. Graham remembered once passing by the place with Lily Scot, and saying to her, "We must try to have something like that, must we not?" And he recollected her sweet, shy smile, and modest look of grateful affection; and now that the pretty dwelling, with its cheerful rooms, was to be his, he had lost her, and all the promises of love. That is so hard in life, though in youth we do not realize it. It is not that we never get what the fair traitress Hope promises so liberally to our eager desires, it is that she dispenses her gifts one by one, and seldom or never when we can enjoy them in their fullness. That pretty cage which Edward Graham had longed for to place his darling bird in might be his now, but the bird was estranged, and, saddest of all, he wished for it no more.

"I suppose it must always be so," he thought, with a sigh, as Mr. Lennard, taking the key out of his pocket, opened the door and let him in; "but the more's the pity."

"The rooms are not amiss," said Mr. Lennard, throwing a window open, and letting in the morning sun; "and the furniture, though plain, is good. You can go and look

at the bedrooms up-stairs. You will find me in the orchard."

Edward Graham merely gave a look to the upper rooms, then joined Mr. Lennard, who was walking rapidly under the pear and apple trees, and now and then stretching out his hand to pick some of the dead man's fruit.

"Well, does the house suit you?" he asked, without looking at Edward Graham.

"The house suits me well enough. What about the terms?"

"Ah! what about the terms? Monsieur Duhamel's *beurré* beats mine. Well, suppose we say twelve hundred francs, forty-eight pounds, a year; or, if you like, ninety-six pounds, which I shall deduct from the four hundred?"

"That is a very strange way of doing business, Mr. Lennard."

"Very," replied Mr. Lennard, with perfect candor. "But, then, this is a peculiar transaction altogether. I give you, in reality, Monsieur Duhamel's shoes for nothing. I let you have his house, furniture, and all, at a moderate price. I must have some security that my late wife's nieces do not lose through my good-nature—eh?" And he laid his finger to his nose, and gave Mr. Graham one of his boring looks.

"Very well," answered the young man, carelessly; "it makes very little difference to me. You will acknowledge the receipt of two years' rent, give me three hundred and four pounds in ready money, and there will be no need of any further transactions between us until the two years are out."

"Just so," said Mr. Lennard, dryly; "only, when do you mean to take possession? This afternoon?"

"I must go to England first, and settle some little matters there, Mr. Lennard."

"And you will be back?" said Mr. Lennard, interrogatively.

"This day week, at the latest."

Mr. Lennard looked by no means pleased at the delay.

"And suppose I should change my mind?" he suggested, tauntingly.

"You are quite free to do so," was the composed reply.

Edward Graham would have scorned to exact a pledge from Mr. Lennard, for he had no faith in his honor, and he felt he could trust implicitly to his passions. He felt, too,

though he did not say so, the urgency of taking time by the forelock; but for his aunt, he would have left Saint Aubin that very morning, in order to return the more speedily, and step into those shoes of Monsieur Duhamel which Mr. Lennard's capricious and revengeful feelings had so unexpectedly put before his feet.

Mr. Lennard was silent till they left the house. When he had locked the door and put the key in his pocket, he looked at his companion, and said, significantly:

"Mr. Graham, take my advice—come back without loss of time. I *might* change my mind. My good-for-nothing nephew, Dick Cowper, might like the late Monsieur Duhamel's shoes."

"And would you give him Miss Bertram's four hundred pounds?" asked Edward Graham, derisively. "No! Well, then, Mr. Lennard, the late Monsieur Duhamel's shoes are worth very little without that. I believe your way lies in that direction; mine is in this. Good-morning, Mr. Lennard."

He raised his hat with grave politeness, and walked away without looking back. Mr. Lennard stared after him, then laughed aloud, and went his way, shaking his head over it all.

Edward Graham staid within the whole day, but Mr. Lennard made no sign. His aunt sent him word that her cold was better, and that she would leave with him the next morning. She kept her word, and they met in the yard of the inn, where the car stood waiting for the travelers. They had not been able to secure the *coupé*, and had to sit down in the interior with three peasant-women strung with baskets and parcels, and an old Norman in a blue blouse and white nightcap.

"How is your cold, aunt?" asked Edward Graham, struck with the disturbed expression of his aunt's face. "You do not look well."

Mrs. Graham protested that she was quite well, but with many nods and heavy sighs declared that it was something else—something quite different. She would tell him in Dieppe. She would rather not talk about it now.

"The good old soul has been taking my part—or Lily's part—with Mrs. Scot and her daughter, and there has been a difference," thought Edward Graham. "God bless her!

She will never be able to see wrong done and hold her tongue."

"I fear, auntie, your news is not pleasant," he said, cheerfully. "I, too, have a piece of news for you."

"Good news for you, Ned?" said she, suddenly brightening up.

"I hope so, auntie. I will tell you later."

Mrs. Graham nodded sagaciously, and, looking at her neighbors, remarked mysteriously that the natives of this part of France were very sly, and might understand more than they pretended. "Do you think, for instance," she added, in a perfectly distinct voice, "that this old gentleman in the nightcap is really asleep? I think he is only pretending."

"And do you think he understands English, auntie?" asked Edward Graham, much amused.

"I should not wonder if he did," cried Mrs. Graham, at the pitch of her voice, so that the old man gave a start, stared around him, then burst out into a low chuckle, which thoroughly disconcerted Mrs. Graham, who, being the soul of good-nature, was suddenly distressed at the thought of having hurt his feelings.

"Pas possible de comprendre un mot de leur baragouinage," said the old gentleman, nudging the woman next him, who drew back with a prudish air.

"My goodness! what does he say?" cried Mrs. Graham, in a flurry. "I hope he is not affronted."

"No, aunt; he declares he cannot understand a word of our gibberish."

"Why, it is their talk that is gibberish," said Mrs. Graham, rather indignantly.

"Of course, it is, auntie. The mote and the beam hold good in this as in many another case."

The rest of their journey was uneventful, but Edward Graham noticed with concern that his aunt's kind face relapsed into its previous gloom, and never cleared until they alighted from the car, and went into a quiet hotel. The room they were shown into was on the ground-floor, and looked out on the quay. They could see the people passing by, and wagons heavily laden going to the railway-station, and the boat they were to cross in, and a line of blue sea-water shining in the sun they saw, too.

"I think I will sit with my back to it," said Mrs. Graham, shuddering at the sight of her enemy.

"Do, auntie; and now you can tell me what has happened."

Mrs. Graham's face became clouded once more.

"Oh! such a terrible affair, but it is a relief to talk about it. Lily Bertram has run away."

The journey had made Edward Graham thirsty, but on hearing this he put down his glass untasted.

"Run away!—with whom?" he asked, after a pause.

"No one knows; but a gardener, who had worked for Mr. Bertram many years, left Saint Aubin last night for Héronville, where Miss Bertram's cousins on her mother's side are all living, and it is supposed she went off with him to them. Mr. Lennard never found it out till this morning, and he started for Héronville at once. Poor little thing!—I fear he will be very unkind when he catches her."

"I fear so, too," said Edward Graham, much disturbed. He was sorry for Miss Bertram, but he also felt uneasy on his own account. "You do not think she is gone to England to Miss Cowper's?" he said, after a while.

"My dear boy, how could the child go to England alone?" answered Mrs. Graham, staring. "And then they are all so unkind to the poor little thing. Mrs. Petherick comes rushing in with the news, and Mrs. Scot flies into a rage, and calls her an ungrateful monkey, as if the poor child had anything to be grateful about! and Lily Scot—why, Lily herself all but loses her temper when I take the child's part, and says in a heat that she is a very forward girl, and that most probably William Lennard has abetted her, for it seems he, too, is missing; and, after all, perhaps she has run off with him."

"Why should she, auntie?" dryly asked Edward Graham.

"Well, yes; and I said so. I said to Lily, 'My dear, I dare say Mr. Lennard would only be too glad if little Miss Bertram, who is an heiress and a pretty girl, were to run off with his nephew.' And Lily colored up, and her eyes quite flashed, she was so angry; and—and I am warm, you know, and so our parting was not as pleasant as it ought to have been. I dare say it was all my fault," added Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose.

"And is nothing else known?"

"Nothing; save that her bed was not slept in."

"And does no one suspect that she may have gone to England?"

"Oh! no. I said to Lily, 'Don't you think, dear, she may have gone to Miss Cowper's?' But Lily answered, 'Do you think Miss Cowper would have her?' So I saw by that she knew nothing."

Miss Scot knew more than Mrs. Graham gave her credit for. She knew of Miss Cowper's letter, and had read it, and had heard Miss Bertram protest that she would go to that lady; but she knew, too, how to keep her own counsel, and in her heart she was not sorry that Miss Bertram should be out of the way.

Edward Graham was very silent during the rest of the meal—he could not help wondering if Miss Bertram's flight would affect his new prospects, and, if so, how far. His aunt had forgotten that he had something to tell her, and he did not renew the subject. Mrs. Graham, whose gloomy looks had returned, said not one word until, as dinner was nearly ended, she broke out with—

"He has such a bad look."

"Who has, auntie?"

"Mr. Lennard. I wish she were out of his hands, Ned."

"I wish she had never been in them, aunt. Will you take a walk?"

"I can't, Ned—I can't get that poor child out of my head. I must write to Lily Scot, and tell her to let me know all about poor little Lily Bertram. I shall not be able to sleep for thinking of her. I shall always see that wicked little man catching her."

Edward Graham did not answer. He pushed back his chair, and was rising to go, when his eyes, which were gazing abstractedly through the window before him, suddenly took a startled look. A peasant-girl, in a long black cloak, with a little bundle in her hand, was looking in at them through the panes. Surely that pale face under the black hood was one he knew.

"Aunt," said he, quietly, "turn round and tell me who it is that is looking in at us."

Mrs. Graham did as she was bid, and, while she clasped

her hand and uttered a startled cry, Edward Graham went to the door, and, opening it, let Miss Bertram in.

"Lily," said Mrs. Graham, rising so abruptly that her chair fell back—"Lily, my poor child, is it you?"

"I have run away," said Lily. "I am going to England, to Miss Cowper. Will you let me go with you, Mrs. Graham?"

It was to her that she spoke, but at Edward Graham that she looked. His heart ached at that wistful, pleading look. Every manly impulse in his bosom awoke and went toward her, as, without giving his aunt time to reply, he held out his hand, and said, "Yes, Lily, we will take you."

"Of course, we will!" cried Mrs. Graham, hysterically. "And, O Edward, do tell them to give the child some dinner; and let us make haste and be gone."

Mr. Graham obeyed. He was not so much surprised. He had in some sort expected it all along. He had felt that this trouble was wanting to complete the rest. He ordered dinner for Lily, and left her with his aunt while he went and secured an extra berth for her. When he came back, Mrs. Graham met him with outstretched arms and tearful eyes.

"O Ned!" she said, half laughing, half crying, "you would never guess how she came! Why, she came in the car with us, or rather upon it. She sat on the top under that big hood of a thing, and the driver knew her, though she wore a peasant's dress; but, God bless him, he would not betray the child, and she was in Saint Aubin last night, but you are not to ask where, for she is not to tell, and here she is, while Mr. Lennard is running off to Héronville, and she traveled like a little Norman peasant, with a white cap and all, and gave us such a start—God bless her!"

All this time Lily was looking at Mr. Graham with a sad, wistful smile, though she said not a word.

"How old are you, Miss Bertram?" he asked, rather gravely.

"I shall soon be eighteen," she answered.

"Then you will have to wait three years before you are free," said he, and his look rested kindly on the pale, sad girl who still looked such a child.

They soon went on board, and soon were out at sea. The weather was calm and fair, but it was night when they reached London. Edward Graham drove home with his

aunt and Lily to Hammersmith. He alighted first, and helped his aunt to come down. When she stood on the pavement, she said to him:

"The poor little thing is done up; she has fallen asleep."

He looked in and saw her pale face, on which the gaslight shone. It was sad, even in slumber, and tears were still lying on her cheek.

"Poor little thing," he half sighed, "she cannot help it, but it is hard;" for he thought of Mr. Lennard and what his wrath would be, and how his chance of success was once more over.

"Ned," called back his aunt, as he was turning away, economically walking home, "what were those good news you were to tell me?"

"They have not crossed the sea, aunt," he answered. "Good-night—God bless you, Lily."

And Mr. Graham was right. Two days later there came a furious letter from Mr. Lennard, which the young man was wise enough not to answer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Now mind you come and dine with us to-morrow—no, the day after," Mrs. Graham said to her nephew before they parted.

"Very well, auntie," he had answered, and, faithful to the appointment, he went to Hammersmith the next day but one. It happened to be a Monday, and ever afterward Edward Graham, in that secret autobiography which we all keep, called it Memorable Monday. In the morning came Mr. Lennard's letter. That was expected, yet trying, especially when, casting up his accounts with an anxious brow, Edward Graham looked at the bare and desolate road before him, and, far as he might gaze, nothing less bleak appeared to cheer him now.

Perhaps it was natural that when, on reaching his aunt's house that evening, that good lady welcomed him with a dismayed "O Ned! she's gone"—perhaps, we say, it was nat-

ural that Edward Graham should not feel much disappointed. Lily had always cost him rather dear, and, though he was not so ungenerous as to resent it, he could not forget it either. So it was very calmly that he said:

"She has not run away, I hope?"

"Run away! oh, no! but Miss Cowper came and fetched her this morning. I begged hard to keep her till to-morrow, but Miss Cowper would not hear of it; and when shall we see her again?" despondently added Mrs. Graham.

Mr. Graham looked as if he could bear the loss of Lily's society, but he was silent.

"It seems Miss Cowper is going to travel, and as, of course, she cannot take Lily, she will put her into a convent —oh! so far away. I wanted to keep the child, but Miss Cowper became so grand, and said Miss Bertram was confided to her by the late Mr. Bertram, and so on, that she silenced me. Lily, too, though she looked wistfully at me, said it was her papa's wish, and there was an end of it all, and the girl was gone. Poor little Lily! I do not suppose Mr. Lennard can come and take her away?"

"It is not likely, aunt. He was her guardian according to French, but not by English law."

"True. Ned, the man must be savage."

"Yes, aunt, he must." And Edward Graham remembered the morning's letter.

"And, if he could do us any injury, he would," continued Mrs. Graham.

"We need not doubt that, aunt."

"But, then, he may not know where Lily Bertram is."

"Oh! yes, aunt, he does." And, concealment being useless, Mr. Graham showed his aunt Mr. Lennard's letter, and explained its purport.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Graham, pitifully—"my poor boy, that is hard!" And she clasped her hands, and looked at him with much sorrow.

"Auntie," said he, lightly, "you promised me my dinner, and I am getting quite hungry."

But, though dinner was brought in at once, though Mrs. Graham did her best to be hospitable, she could not recover from the depression brought on by her nephew's confession.

"I know I am the cause of it all," she said, gloomily. "If I had discouraged the child, she would not have run away

and joined us. It is all my doing. To loose such a chance as that of Monsieur Duhamel's shoes! And I dare say you would have married Lily Scot, too."

"I do not think so, aunt," he answered, coldly.

"And I who told you Lily Bertram was the gold thread in your life!" persisted Mrs. Graham. "Why, she has proved the blackest of black threads, poor little innocent! Ned, Ned, it is very good of you to forgive me, but I don't deserve it. You warned me against it, but I would have my own way; I would bring it all on. My poor boy, I must do something. You must let me give you money, and I must talk to Mrs. Fay, and tell her to make you build something or other for her."

"Auntie," he interrupted, laying his hand on her arm, and speaking rather gravely, "do not not talk of giving me more money, or I shall think myself a doomed man, destined to hang upon you. As to Mrs. Fay, please let her alone. She is rich, but I dare say she is like Miss Cowper with her almshouses."

"But Mr. Blake?" cried Mrs. Graham, brightening; "you spoke of a Mr. Blake in Saint Aubin."

"Yes, auntie, and he is gone to the Continent, and will come back Heaven knows when! Come, auntie, do not look tragic. It is a long lane that has no turning!"

He spoke hopefully and did his best to comfort her. He partly succeeded, but, when they parted, and he walked home under a starry sky, meeting the chill breath of the September evening, his own thoughts were dark enough.

"I am twenty-eight," thought he, "and I owe two hundred pounds, and can barely earn my bread. It is time there should be a change, for surely the lane is a long one."

So spake Despondency; but Hope, though unheeded, was close by all the time, her hand upon the gate that was going to open a new path before Edward Graham, a path that went no longer through arid wastes, but which wound through bounteous shade and sweet waters to a fair city bathed in golden light.

As the young man reached his own door, and let himself in with a latch-key, a man in the passage was hurrying out, followed by Mrs. Rawlings.

"Why, there he is!" she cried. "O Mr. Graham! a telegram for you, sir, on the parlor-table, sir." And she

bustled in with him, and stood looking in his face as he tore the envelope open.

"No bad news, sir, I hope?" said Mrs. Rawlings. "Ever since I got a telegram telling me there had been a fire in the house, and that all the window-curtains were burned to a cinder—that was not in the telegram, but I found it out when I came back—ever since then the mere sight of those envelopes gives me quite a turn."

"No, not bad news, thank you," said Edward Graham, briefly. "I am going out of town for some time, Mrs. Rawlings, and I see"—looking at his watch—"I have no time to lose to catch the train. I leave you my keys, as I shall probably trouble you to send me down some things. If any letters or messages come, you will kindly forward them at once to this direction. Good-night, Mrs. Rawlings."

"And when will you be back, sir?" asked Mrs. Rawlings, following him to the door.

"I cannot say, Mrs. Rawlings."

An empty cab was passing by, he hailed it, got in, and it was over. Mrs. Rawlings, rather bewildered, and, indeed, rather uneasy, went back to the parlor, and, spying the telegraphic message on the floor, picked it up and read its brief contents without scruple, for, since the people at the telegraphic office knew all about it, why might not she? The message was from J. P. Blake, Blake House, and ran thus: "Come at once. House in danger."

"I declare, a breath would have knocked me down," said Mrs. Rawlings, when relating this incident to her married daughter. "When I thought of the house tumbling down, and the poor creatures in it, I felt so faint that I could scarcely stand."

Blake House was indeed in some peril, thanks to Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake had intended going to the Continent; Mr. Blake had changed his mind at the eleventh hour; Mr. Blake, suddenly discovering that Mr. Graham was not his man, and that he (Mr. Blake) had a genius for architecture, had gone on with the repairs of Blake House after a fashion of his own. The result was that "house-in-danger" message which had given Mrs. Rawlings a turn, and sent off Edward Graham on an unexpected journey.

The young architect, on his arrival, found Mr. Blake both alarmed and penitent. Mr. Blake was also in mortal dread

of ridicule. He knew that, if the world got hold of so good a story as his turning amateur builder and architect, and thereby endangering the safety of his ancestral mansion, the world which, as we know, is a good-natured world, would never let it go again, but would shake it at him vauntingly till the day of his death. Mr. Blake was, therefore, in a state of abject fear, which Edward Graham saw through, and did his best to dispel by hinting quietly that he made it a rule never to talk on professional matters. Mr. Blake's spirits rose on the assurance. He did not thank Edward Graham, but he shook hands with him, and said, cheerfully:

"Well, Mr. Graham, suppose we do not go in merely for repairs, which are always odious, but for a new wing, eh?"

"I am not sure that it is wanted," honestly said Mr. Graham.

"Yes, yes it is," hastily replied Mr. Blake, who longed to destroy every trace of his handiwork. "We will see about it to-morrow morning."

And the next morning they both looked at the gray old house, in the mild September sunshine, and the new wing was decreed forthwith.

"But he may slip through my fingers yet," thought Edward Graham, who could not believe in so much good fortune. And such, indeed, might have been the case, but for Mr. Blake's lurking fear of having his delinquencies revealed. "If I let him go he will tell every one about it," thought Mr. Blake. So, not to let Edward Graham go, he made work for him. When the weather interfered with the new wing, Mr. Blake discovered that the interior of Blake House wanted renovating. The picture-gallery was all wrong. The ball-room was too low. In vain Mr. Graham, who was honest, protested against this waste of time and money; Mr. Blake, who only became more resolute when he was opposed, had his way. So passed the winter. In spring the new wing was finished, and Mr. Graham, nothing loath, escaped from Mr. Blake and came back to London. He had run down two or three times, spite Mr. Blake, on other business which he had refused to neglect; but his visits had been brief and unexpected, and, though he had made the attempt, he had not been able to see his aunt once. The moment he got home he wrote to her:

"DEAR AUNTIE:

"If you will have me to-morrow (Saturday), I shall be very glad to dine with you at the usual hour.

"Your affectionate nephew,

"EDWARD GRAHAM."

"The dear boy!" cried Mrs. Graham, overjoyed, as she read this note.—"Cook, Mr. Graham is coming to dine with me to-morrow. Mind, we have his favorite cabinet-pudding; and—let me see—yes, he likes lamb. We will have lamb and his Julienne soup—and I dare say something else," meditatively added Mrs. Graham; for, woman-like, her first thought was to feed her nephew. Mrs. Graham's second thoughts were not expressed aloud. "I wonder how he is getting on with that Mr. Blake," said Mrs. Graham to herself. "He never said much in his letters. I dare say not well—I dare say not well. Ah! if he would only let me give him some money—bad boy!"

So full was Mrs. Graham of these thoughts that, when the next day came and six o'clock brought Edward Graham's knock at the door, and his tall form and olive face in Mrs. Graham's parlor, they gave their own hue to her welcome.

"My dear boy, I am glad to see you," she cried, giving him a hearty kiss and a warm pressure of the hand. "And I am sure that Mr. Blake has worried you and not behaved well; and you must let me help you," said Mrs. Graham, with a tear in her eye. "If you had married Lily Bertram, it would all have been well; but, as you did not, and she ran away, and only brought new trouble, and it was my fault, you really must let me help you—just for a while."

"Auntie," cried Mr. Graham, amazed, "what do you mean?" And, placing his two hands on Mrs. Graham's shoulders, he looked down in her face. "Mr. Blake has not worried me at all," he resumed; "and he has behaved splendidly, and swears by me, and thinks there is not another man like me in the United Kingdom; and if I had married Lily Bertram, poor child! it must have been for her money, you know; and, by running away, she rendered me a great service, for if I had stepped into Monsieur Duhamel's shoes, and taken the four hundred pounds, I should not be what I am now—please Heaven!—a made man."

"A made man!" repeated Mrs. Graham, vaguely.

"What do you think of that, auntie?" said he, taking a bundle of bank-notes out of his pocket, and putting two in her hand. "All a hundred pounds each, auntie. And you want to help me, do you? Why, it is I who am going to help you with your charities. Mind you put me down for something handsome."

Mrs. Graham looked at his smiling face, at the notes in her hand, at the little bundle which he flourished before her eyes, and she was beginning to cry for joy, when she thought better of it and laughed.

"My dear boy," said she, delighted, "I am so happy! And you look so well—quite handsome, Ned! I ought to have seen it at once. Of course, you are a made man. God bless that good Mr. Blake! And I have got your cabinet-pudding, you saucy boy, and your Julienne soup, and let us have our dinner."

The dinner was a good one, and Edward Graham did it justice. He was floating on that wave of success which makes a man feel so light and buoyant. Never, since the days when he was a schoolboy, or since that time when he was engaged to Lily Scot, and was building Mr. Bertram's turret, had Mr. Graham been in such good spirits as he was now. His aunt wondered what he thought of the past, and what he would feel if he knew that Lily Scot was engaged to William Lennard; but she wisely forebore to put the question. "There are many dead besides those that sleep in their graves," thought Mrs. Graham, with a sigh, "and we must let them be."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE happy years of life glide by like smooth waters. No rocks, no drifting trees, which the storm tore up root and branch, impede their course, and fill them with wrath and foam. They flow calmly on through shade and sunshine, and take no record of time. So was it now with Edward Graham. He had said no more than the truth when he had told his aunt that he was a made man. He had not achieved greatness, which is the lot of few. He could not boast of

wealth, which professional men rarely attain; but Blake House, and especially Mr. Blake, made him widely known. He had a good position, as the world goes, and he earned a fair competency by congenial labor.

The life he led was after his own heart, for it was fully occupied, and to himself deeply interesting. As a story, however, it was uneventful. He had his anxieties and his cares, but they were neither long nor deep. When they were over, it was fair weather again; and, when other troubles came, they were of the same slight and transitory nature as the first had been. Never more did he go through the terrible ordeal which had attended his great effort at Saint Aubin; never again did failure wear so cruel an aspect; and, above all, never had his feelings to be involved in purely professional matters. He earned money—he spent it, not extravagantly, but freely. He took pleasure in moderation. He traveled, but shunned the Norman coast. He saw famous old cities, which had been the dream of his boyhood; he enjoyed life, but he worked hard, and lived alone, and so reached the age of thirty-one.

It was more Edward Graham's misfortune than his fault that he had no bosom friend. His education had been a home one, for many years, at least, and so he had missed one of the great blessings of youth—its pleasant ties and happy companionship. So far as friendship went, his life was cold. He had but one true affection to give it warmth—his tenderness for his aunt, Mrs. Graham. She had become somewhat infirm and sedentary of late, and once or twice a week Edward Graham spent part of the evening with her. "Like a good boy," as Mrs. Graham said. Sometimes he staid a few minutes only—sometimes he remained two or three hours, but come to her he must. She was to him that sweet water without which life would be too parched and dry.

We know so little about ourselves, that Mr. Graham did not know this. "I cannot forsake the dear old soul, who has been so kind to me," he would say to himself, as his cab drove up to her door. And, when he saw her kind face brighten, and felt his own heart warm in his bosom as he sat down in the chair facing hers, he did not know that he received even more than he gave in the exchange of love between them. She had her poor to feed, her vagrants to reclaim, her stray dogs even to shelter; but, if Mr. Graham

had questioned his own heart, he would have found that, in his life of hard work, intellectual pleasures, and worldly pursuits, the love he bore his old aunt was the only gleam of sunshine.

Thus it was that, one evening in late spring, he rushed into her parlor, after a hard day's work, tired, yet as pleased as a schoolboy who has thrown down his books, and means to luxuriate in idleness.

"Now, auntie, a cup of your best tea, if you please," said he, throwing himself down in the chair that was devoted to his use.

From her chair, facing his, Mrs. Graham looked at him complacently. Good-fortune becomes most men; it clears the brow, it opens the look, and gives a genial meaning to the countenance. Edward Graham's Italian face had lost that habitual severity which had characterized it some years before this time. Gravity was still its prevailing aspect, but a gravity tempered by quiet good-humor.

"You're a bonny fellow," thought Mrs. Graham; "but, perhaps, you know it, so I'll not tell you.—A cup of tea?" she said aloud; "is it a cup, or ten, Ned?"

"Auntie, don't be satirical. You don't know how delicious a cup of tea tastes after work; and if one cup be delicious, why not ten?"

Mrs. Graham did not answer, but, while her nephew was drinking the tea she had poured out for him, she puckered up her forehead into many wrinkles, and, looking meditatively at the fire—for, though it was not cold, she felt chilly, and liked a mild glow—she rubbed her nose slowly, then said, with her usual suddenness:

"Ned, you earn a good deal of money now—do you spend it all?"

"I am afraid I do, but, if you want any for your poor people, auntie—" said he, putting his hand in his pocket.

"No, no," she interrupted, "that is not it. Ned, you should save—you should marry."

"Well, I dare say I shall, some day, auntie."

"Then why not now? Where's the use of waiting to get a sour old bachelor of forty?"

"Thank you, auntie. Another cup of tea *en attendant.* That's three."

"Where's the use of waiting?" pursued Mrs. Graham.

"Men of forty don't like women of thirty. They like girls of eighteen, which is a shame, and then they have babies as fast as can be, and they are gray-headed when their sons grow up, and these laugh at them as if they were in their dotage; and when they die they leave a young widow and a year-old baby behind them."

"Aunt, you make me feel quite low-spirited. A little more cream to cheer me up. That last baby is cruel, auntie. I did not think you could be so hard-hearted, auntie. Poor little innocent in its frilled cap!"

"Don't be foolish, Ned. Take an old woman's advice; get a nice girl, and marry her. She will be pleasant to look at, she will give you society, children, and a comfortable home."

"And an unlimited number of cups of tea! My dear aunt, no woman is generous enough to do that. The dear creatures all grudge us the sugar."

"There it is," said Mrs. Graham, shaking her head at him. "You are already getting a cynical old bachelor. Now, if you had married Lily Scot," she pursued, looking at the fire, "it would be different with you, Ned."

"Yes, aunt, it would," he answered, looking at her attentively.

"I dare say that, since that time, you have never seen such a nice girl as she was?"

"Well, I don't think I have, aunt. Miss Scot was a charming girl; and then, oh! rare and inestimable blessing, she knew nothing of music! You rail at me for being a bachelor. I declare to you, the music of young ladies has often scared me away from the shores of matrimony."

"Ned," said Mrs. Graham, looking him full in the face, "why should you not marry Lily Scot?"

Mr. Graham neither moved nor started at this point-blank proposal. His hand, which was raising the cup to his lips, neither put it up more hastily, nor laid it down with displeasure and impatience, but gravity settled on his whole aspect, as a cloud may darken a summer sky.

"Aunt, this is all over, and has been over for years," said he, slowly.

"Why so? You are not poor now, and Lily is as pretty, and as nice, too, as ever."

"And what has become of Mr. William Lennard?" asked Mr. Graham, dryly.

"O Ned! don't you know? The poor boy was lost with the Swallow a year ago."

There was a pause, during which neither spoke.

"Ned," resumed Mrs. Graham, "I think you were all wrong about that lad. Mrs. Petherick made a world of mischief with all her talk; and, if Lily Scot was engaged to him, why, it was Mrs. Petherick's doing. As to Lily herself, I tell you she is as dear a girl as ever, and I could not see her again without thinking of you."

"Is Miss Scot in England?" asked Mr. Graham, in a tone of polite indifference which ought to have chilled his aunt's zeal; but she only answered, more warmly:

"Of course, she is, the dear girl, with her mother. Jane is gone to live with her aunt in Torquay, and Louisa has remained in Saint Aubin as a governess, and I don't think that Mrs. Scot means to remain in England," said Mrs. Graham, in the eagerness of her zeal.

Mr. Graham was silent. His aunt's face fell.

"I am sorry," she said. "I thought—I hoped you cared for her still. I don't mean as you did formerly, but enough to begin over again."

She looked at him with her simple earnestness, and, leaning back in his chair, he looked at her, smiling at her quaint phraseology.

"Dear old auntie," he thought, "she never was in love, save with her poor, her vagrants, her stray cats and dogs, that is plain. How she talks of beginning over again! As if one ever did!"

"And so you will not," said Mrs. Graham, and her face fell. "Well, Ned, do you think it likely that you will ever meet again with such a girl as Lily—so pretty, so sensible, so amiable. Do you expect it?"

"No, aunt," he candidly answered; "I should be a fool if I did. Miss Scot is by a good deal the prettiest and most amiable girl I have met in my time. *Ma che volete?*" he added, relapsing as he did sometimes into his mother's language—"there came a jar between us; it lasted a moment only, but it broke the spell which time and separation had weakened, and I, for one, don't care to begin again."

"The more's the pity," said Mrs. Graham, rather sadly;

"I should have liked you to have a nice wife, and my dear Lily a good husband."

"Let us hope both your wishes will be fulfilled, aunt," he answered, smiling; "and what about Saint Aubin—how is the old place getting on?"

"Lily does not say much. Mr. Lennard is ailing and very wicked. And—what do you think?—Mr. Cowper, you know, has set up as an architect. He is not doing very well, I believe."

"Monsieur Duhamel's shoes, I suppose," said Edward Graham, dryly.

"Mrs. Petherick and Captain Jekyll have had a terrible quarrel about nothing, as usual, and some people are dead and some new people have come, and Mr. Lennard—I forgot that—Mr. Lennard is more bitter than ever about our having helped Lily Bertram to escape."

"Poor little Lily! you have never seen her since?"

"No, never. She is so far away. I got a letter from her the other day—a nice letter. Shall I show it to you?"

Mrs. Graham half rose.

"No, auntie, thank you," said he, checking her; "for, now that I have drunk all your tea, I must bid you good-night."

"Lily and her mother are coming to take tea with me next week," said Mrs. Graham, unwilling to lose this last chance. But Mr. Graham only smiled again, bade her a good-night, and so left her.

The night was a fine one. Mr. Graham walked home. He had a house in Pimlico now, and might have kept his carriage, if he liked. So, at least, said the world, which always knows so well what we can or cannot do with our money. But the truth was that, though Mr. Graham could have afforded his horse and brougham, like another man, the expense might have entailed many things which he did not care to face, and, being a man of a prudent turn, he had resolved to wait till he married (for to marry he intended) before he indulged in this almost necessary luxury. In two or three years he hoped to be able to have both wife and carriage, and in the mean while he was well content to wait. So he now walked home, as we said, but with him, for the first time for many, many months, walked the memory of that past which his aunt had called up. It was not love, for love is no Phœnix to rise from its ashes, but even the ghost

of love is strong, and, spirit-like, is not laid easily to rest. Edward Graham could not help going back to that first dream of his youth; he was not an old man, but he had outlived the feelings which had made Lily Scot dear to him. He felt that he could not, even if he wished it, like her again for that which had made him like her years ago. By the change in himself he guessed what the change in her must be. Miss Scot was now twenty-five; she had had trials and disappointments, and, for all he knew, deep sorrows. Had she grieved for that rough boy who had been lost at sea? Had she mourned in secret over his ocean-grave, and borne outwardly the same serene aspect which he remembered so well, which had enchanted him at first, but which, to the seeming of his mature years, was too like the gentle beauty of a moonlight night to charm him now. Who could tell?—she never would. Never would her husband know her real feelings on that score. She would be gentle, affectionate, and fond, but what William Lennard or another man had been to her she would keep within her own heart as a portion of the past with which he need have no concern.

Such meditations did not seem very favorable to Mrs. Graham's wishes; and yet they had stirred to their very depths those sluggish waters of indifference beneath which the image of Lily Scot had slept for years. She now rose before him, on the darkness of the night, in her graceful beauty, young, fair, sweet, and gentle, not, perhaps, all that she was, but at least all that she had seemed to be in his eyes. And, after all, with what sins could he reproach her? What had she done that her shrine should be desecrated? Must we always revile the worship from which we turn? Can we not keep some tender reverence for the past which we abjure? And so, little by little, something of that secret revolt with which he had received his aunt's suggestions melted away out of Edward Graham's heart. He was not in the least inclined "to begin again," but the protest with which he had heard Mrs. Graham seemed to grow more feeble as he remembered the past.

And, when he reached his pleasant house in Pimlico—when he entered that large, handsomely-furnished room, so unlike Mrs. Rawlings's dingy parlor—when he went up to the ebony bookcase and took down De Renneville, it was not chance that led his hand. The name and memory of

Lily Scot had brought in their train recollections of which he wished to test the correctness by referring to the volume which had played so great a part in his life. But chance it was—that Nemesis which seems to mock the present with the past—that made a card fall out of the book on the floor at his feet. He picked it up, and saw before him that little image of Lily Scot which his aunt had left behind her on the night when De Renneville had first become his. The photograph had not remained there all that time. It had long been kept among Edward Graham's choicest treasures, then gently and respectfully placed within the pages of the fated book as a sad and tender memorial of a happy yet sorrowful past; then, inevitable destiny, it had been forgotten in the great busy tide of life, and now it fell out on the Turkey carpet at his feet, a reproach, and, maybe, a sign!

"After all, why not?" thought Mr. Graham, looking at the sweet face almost as kindly as he had looked at it five years before. "It will not be love—that first love which, if it be not a dream, passes like one—but it will do nearly as well, as the world goes. After all, I know ten times more of her than of another girl. I risk little or nothing with Lily Scot, and with a stranger what do I not venture! Surely, surely, marriage is the most awful leap in the dark man or woman ever took. Is it not a rare privilege, then, when we can pledge ourselves to beings whom we know, whose virtues and whose weaknesses are not hidden from us behind that impenetrable veil which is deeper and darker than that of the Egyptian goddess herself?"

He looked about him. The room, as we have said, was a handsome one. It had a few fine bronzes and some choice paintings. Italian landscapes, wild Scotch mountains, and fair Irish lakes brought their southern light and radiance, their savage grandeur, and their wonderful beauty to this London home. A cheerful fire burned on the hearth, whether he were absent or at home; a lamp shed its clear light on a table laden with pamphlets, newspapers, and books, to welcome the master of the house. His easy-chair was even waiting to give him rest, and yet there was a void in this abode of comfort and ease—something was wanting in this room so pleasant to the eye.

"After all, why not?" thought he, as he put away the photograph, and laid it once more in De Renneville's book.

"It will not pledge either of us to anything." And, on the impulse of the moment, he wrote off to Mrs. Graham:

"DEAR AUNTIE:

"I will look in upon you any evening that you will please to appoint. A whole evening is rarely mine, as you know. If I should fail, you will think that the way, not the will, was wanting. Yours affectionately,

"EDWARD GRAHAM."

"I am so glad," Mrs. Graham said aloud, on receiving this intimation that her nephew had changed his mind. "I shall ask Lily Scot and her mother at once. But, perhaps—perhaps, I shall say nothing about his coming, so that, if he should not be able to come," prudently thought Mrs. Graham, "there will be no harm done."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"MRS. FAY!—surely I know the name of Mrs. Fay!" thought Edward Graham, the next morning, as he opened one after the other the heap of letters on his breakfast-table, and lingered over one, a little perfumed scrawl, written in a delicate though erratic hand. "Saint Olave's Abbey—that, too, I know, or ought to know." Then all at once the past came back, and was once more living before him. Mrs. Fay was that wealthy friend of his aunt's, to whose patronage the good lady had so often and so vainly recommended him; and Saint Olave's Abbey was one of the fine old mediæval relics which he had visited in the days of his obscure and ambitious youth. "So Mrs. Fay wants me now," thought he, smiling—"she wants me to come and look at her old, tumble-down thing of an abbey, and intimates that I am to have *carte blanche*. Kind Mrs. Fay! It is the rule of this world—because I no longer want you, you want me."

He leaned his elbow on the table, and dreamily went back the tide of years. Once more, with the light heart of

youth, he leaped down from the third-class carriage which had taken him to Saint Olave's—it is only an hour's distance from London by rail—and walked through the green and peaceful country. How sweet feels this summer air, when you leave the hot town, and what a land of rich harvests and plenteous stores is this! Woods shelter it everywhere from cold, bleak winds; and, surely, storms must rarely visit this favored region, though here and there on a rise of ground you get a distant glimpse of a low, blue line of sea. A fine avenue of trees leads to the abbey, and Mr. Graham smiles as he sees his past self standing at the gate-keeper's lodge, hearing that burly potentate's verdict, "Oh! yes, you may go and look at the place, but we don't allow no visitors to visit the abbey. Madam Fay is away, and, whether or no, we never let any one see the abbey, sir."

The man's tone, though not unkind, was arrogant enough, but Edward Graham had to submit. He had not then the "Open Sesame" which now would make every door of that closed dwelling fly open at his command. He went and looked at the abbey, then walked round it till he came to a ruined chapel overlooking a quiet little lake. A tall cedar-tree grew nigh, and flung the shadow of its spreading boughs over the tranquil waters. He could not resist the temptation of sketching it—he had the drawing in his portfolio still—the ivy-grown ruin, the broad tree, the shining sheet of water, over all the warm glow of a summer sun—how well he remembered them, spite the years that had gone by! Then, with a wistful look at the forbidden abbey, he had turned away, walked back along the avenue through the pleasant country to the station, and entered the heat and din of mighty London once more.

"I have a mind to go and look at the old place," now thought Mr. Graham. "Let me see, I have no appointment, no pressing engagement, for this afternoon. I shall just run down and be back to-morrow in time to meet Mr. Jervas."

So said, so done. The day's engagements were crowded into the morning, and by four in the afternoon Mr. Graham had reached Saint Olave's.

Mrs. Fay is the owner of the old abbey. Every one knows, or ought to know, Mrs. Fay. A diplomatist might envy her successes in life. In her youth she persuaded the world that she was a beauty; in middle age she convinced it

that she was a wit; and now that she is getting old she has coaxed it into the belief that she is prodigiously wealthy. There was a time when men raved about her, when great painters gave loveliness to her slight features and colorless face, and when engravers vied in reproducing the image of the beautiful Laura Fay.

"Yes, my dear, I was a beauty once," she says, with a sigh, "but I went off very early. It was well for me that I was more than a beauty," adds Mrs. Fay, with that calm assertion of her own *esprit* which has helped to establish her reputation for brilliancy in conversation and quickness of repartee. After the same fashion has Mrs. Fay impressed society with a conviction that she has a large income, of which she only spends a limited portion. "I am the stingiest creature alive," says Mrs. Fay; "when I have a whim, I must gratify it, of course, but, otherwise, I stint so that I am ashamed of myself, and I don't know why I do it. I have neither kith nor kin, I hate charities, and I am the last person in the world to leave legacies to my friends, so why should I save?" And, as Mrs. Fay is really rich—as she is most lavish when she does spend, and as she can also be stingy to meanness—society takes her at her word, endows her with a fabulous rent-roll, and makes much of the little old fairy. "Yes, my dear, they call me Fairy," Mrs. Fay says, with a shrewd nod, "and I do not care." This is not quite true. Mrs. Fay likes the name, for it implies power, which Mrs. Fay has always been very fond of. Besides, every one knows that fairies are beautiful, clever, and rich; and is not, or has not, Mrs. Fay been all this? Her wit, indeed, has, like her beauty, gone rather early, but who will miss it while the golden wand remains in her hand?

"The old fellow is there still," thought Mr. Graham, as the fly which had brought him from the station drove past the gate-keeper's lodge; "but times are altered with us both; the years that have given him a gouty foot have helped me to climb up a few rungs of the social ladder. But what can tempt Mrs. Fay to lay a profane finger on this noble old place?"

He had reached the end of the avenue, alighted from the fly, and dismissed it. The abbey lay before him in a pleasant sunlit hollow. It was a fine old building, calm and gray in its decay, with waving woods and low, wide plains around

it. The garden in front was bright with flowers and gayly-attired ladies, for it so happened that on this day Mrs. Fay was giving a *fête champêtre* to four hundred and fifty people. She was walking between a bishop and a peer of the realm, when her keen eye detected Mr. Graham at a distance. At once she guessed who he was, and, coolly leaving her illustrious guests to keep each other company—for insolence was one of the secrets of her power over society—she walked off to greet the new-comer.

"Mr. Graham, I am sure," said she, looking up at him. Mrs. Fay was a very little old lady, and, however lovely she might have been in youth, she now had a sharp nose and a peaked-up chin, which was always raised inquiringly. "So kind of you to have come! Pray, don't mind all these foolish people, but look at the abbey as long as you please. A dear old thing, is it not? And oh! Mr. Graham, *when* will you begin? I am the most impatient creature breathing, you must know."

She spoke with an almost girlish ardor, which was not the affectation of youthfulness, but the inevitable result of a light and frivolous mind. Mr. Graham looked at the little figure so fashionably attired, at the little, plump, gloved hands clasped in entreaty, and he contemptuously wondered at this foolish old age.

"Don't say that you cannot begin at once," almost screamed Mrs. Fay, "or I shall be so horridly cross. And, now, do tell me which side the wing is to be at, for, of course, you know it is a wing like Mr. Blake's that I want."

Mr. Graham looked at the abbey as it shone in the mellow sunlight of afternoon, then at the little, thin, pale face and bright eyes turned up to him, and he searched in vain for traces of the beauty that had once been so famous.

"She never was handsome," was his pitiless verdict, "never, never."

"Well," said Mrs. Fay, losing patience, "which is it to be, a right wing or a left?"

"Both, or neither," was his laconic reply.

Mrs. Fay looked enchanted.

"Two wings," she cried, clapping her hands in an ecstasy. "Of course, that is the very thing. I wonder Mr. Blake had only one. And when am I to get these wings, Mr. Graham?"

If the wings had been meant for Mrs. Fay's shoulders, she could not have shown more impatience to possess them. But Mr. Graham, who was a leisurely man, declined to pledge himself on such short notice.

"But I can't wait!" cried Mrs. Fay, puckering up her face into fretful wrinkles. "I am not used to it. I am a little spoiled thing, Mr. Graham, and I have to go back to those tiresome people. Now I shall settle it all so nicely. You will end the week with me, and we shall talk it all over by ourselves."

Nothing could be more coaxingly imperious than Mrs. Fay, as she spoke thus.

"I must be in London to-morrow," said Mr. Graham, smiling, "and—"

"To-morrow?" interrupted Mrs. Fay, stopping her ears. "A day! No, no, not one day—three, four, five days, at the very least! I know hundreds of people, and they will drop in and interfere. One day would never do *me*. And, now that is settled, I must go back to my bishop. Will you come? Ah! no, you don't want a bishop, you want to look at the abbey. Just so! Please to ask for anything you may require. My people expect you, and will attend to all your wishes. *Au revoir*, Mr. Graham."

She waved her little hand and tripped away, light-footed as at fifteen.

"And so Mrs. Fay thinks that I am going to spend a week at Saint Olave's," thought Mr. Graham, too much amused at her presumption to be angry with her. "A week! Not for more money than you would care to spend, Mrs. Fay. You might have had me cheap enough a few years ago, but you did not want me when I was cheap, and now that I am expensive I no longer want you. I suppose the chapel is not gone. This is the way to it, I remember."

Leaving the garden to his left, he walked round the abbey, and soon found the ruin. Nothing seemed changed since he had sat down to draw it, on yonder brown old rock, with its cap of velvet green. The little Gothic building, the old tree, the clear water he gazed on, seemed unaltered.

"A little less stone and more ivy for the ruin," he thought; "and for me, by way of ivy, I suppose, a dozen years more or so, that is all."

As he came to this philosophic conclusion, a group of

ladies, at the head of whom walked little Mrs. Fay, broke on his meditations. With a quick step the mistress of the house preceded her visitors, and, uplifting her little pale face and sharp chin, she said to Mr. Graham, with that scant courtesy which was one of her attributes, and, indeed, with something of imperiousness:

"Mr. Graham, I beg you will remember that you are pledged to me. Miss Cowper's college is a myth. Besides, there is no believing a word she says."

"Miss Cowper!" repeated Mr. Graham, with a sudden remembrance of the past.

"Yes, yes, Miss Cowper, my neighbor.—I was telling Mr. Graham about the college," she added, raising her voice, and turning back to the group of ladies who now stood close by. "He is the very man for you, dear," she continued, with that abominable deceitfulness which is the attribute of your true woman of the world.

Edward Graham could not help looking hard at the lady thus addressed. She certainly was not the Miss Cowper whom he remembered, for she was not merely tall and thin, but she was scarcely thirty years of age. Moreover, she was dressed in the richest of rich silks, and wore a black-velvet cuirass, which gave her a rather masculine aspect, and accorded with the deep voice in which she now addressed him.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Graham," she said, with a good deal of patronage, "and I have no doubt that, as Mrs. Fay says, you are the man for the college. The Regeneration Woman's College. You have heard of it, of course."

"Of course, he has," said the audacious Mrs. Fay; "who has not? This way, my dear creature."

She was tripping on, but the lady in the black cuirass kept her ground.

"I shall be glad to hold some converse with you on that topic," she continued, addressing Mr. Graham with measured solemnity; "I live close by—at Cowper's Hill."

She would have said more, but Mrs. Fay uttered a piercing scream. She had seen a frog; she was sure she had—and frogs were her horror.

"Frogs are perfectly harmless," composedly remarked the lady in the black cuirass, whose mention of Cowper's Hill had rather startled Edward Graham. Was the Miss

Cowper whom he had known dead and gone, and had this other Miss Cowper, so different from her, taken her place and inheritance? But Mrs. Fay's frog gave him no time to seek for further explanation. All the ladies had to gather round Mrs. Fay, and, whether because she was really frightened, or because she did not want the Regeneration Woman's College to occupy Mr. Graham's mind to the detriment of her two wings, she certainly succeeded in depriving him of the opportunity of saying another word to the lady in the black cuirass.

He was not more fortunate with Mrs. Fay herself when they met at dinner. They were alone; for, as Mrs. Fay candidly confessed, "I told a dreadful fib, Mr. Graham—said I had such a headache, and so four or five people, who would have staid if I had asked them, took themselves off. A great comfort!"

Mr. Graham smiled.

"I suppose that Miss Cowper," he began, but Mrs. Fay at once stopped her ears with her little white fingers.

"Not a word about that lady, if we are to be friends," she said, a little imperiously; then, with a pretty, coaxing look: "You could not see about my wings next Monday? No. Well, then, promise now, do"—in her most persuasive accents—"that you will not let anything else interfere with my wings. You will not begin anything else first, will you, Mr. Graham?"

Mr. Graham smiled and looked amused, but he would not promise. Moreover, he was going back to town to-morrow.

"But you cannot leave me in the lurch," pleaded Mrs. Fay. "I am sure I have known some one of your name for whom I had a particular regard—only I can't remember who it is," she candidly added.

"Perhaps my aunt, Mrs. Graham," he suggested.

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Fay, clasping her hands in amazement; "are you really Mrs. Graham's nephew? And how is she, the dear, dear creature; and her niece, that Miss Graham whom she was so fond of—your sister, I suppose—how is *she?*"

And Mrs. Fay looked at Mr. Graham with the deepest interest.

"I have no sister, and my aunt has no niece called Miss Graham," he answered, a little dryly.

"Ah! then it was her nephew that she was so fond of," said Mrs. Fay, no whit disconcerted; "and you are that nephew, of course. How delightful! Only what a terrible pity I did not know long ago that you were an architect."

Mr. Graham, remembering how his aunt's recommendation had fared formerly, could not help smiling.

"But how naughty of you," said Mrs. Fay, plaintively, "not to have told me at once that you were the nephew of my dear, dear old friend, Mrs. Graham!"

"How many years is it since you saw my aunt, Mrs. Fay?"

"Ah! so many," answered Mrs. Fay, in a melancholy tone, "ever so many years; dear Mrs. Graham, how I have missed her!" and her eyes twinkled as she looked at Mr. Graham. "I suppose she is quite old now," she added; "dear old soul! I shall be so glad to see her again. I am *so* fond of old people," said Mrs. Fay, quite warmly.

Mrs. Fay was certainly a very entertaining person. Her audacity amused Mr. Graham extremely. He would not give her the pledge she again wanted to exact, for she was a very obstinate lady, but he drew a rough sketch of the two wings to please this impatient creature. Mrs. Fay was delighted, and, when Mr. Graham hinted that he could not as yet give her any idea of what the expense would be—

"Oh, never mind about *that!*" said she, with an airy contempt of money. "I am so rich that I do not know what to do with it all. Good-night, Mr. Graham. These people have worn me out. Sit up and enjoy yourself as long as you like, and, when you dream, please let it be about my wings."

"Does she mean it all, I wonder?" thought Mr. Graham, looking after her little figure and long, trailing skirt. "Is she so wealthy and so lavish as she says? She has a keen eye, and I shall be much surprised if Mrs. Fay cannot drive a hard bargain."

And Mr. Graham went up to his room, consulted the time-tables, and thought that, instead of leaving by the two-o'clock train, as he had intended, he might as well go by that other train which left the nearest station at nine minutes past nine the next morning. He did not care about Mrs. Fay; he did not even care about adding a pair of wings to the old abbey—he had seen it again, he had had half a day's fresh air, and he wanted to be back to his work.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MRS. FAY was not an early riser, but she got up the next morning an hour before her usual time.

"I want to see about my wings, Hammond," she gayly said to her maid. "And, I declare, the dear man is already staring up at the front of the house, taking notes, of course. Do give me my dressing-gown—a wrapper—anything will do. I must go and see what the man is about."

"Won't you let me do up your hair, ma'am?" asked Hammond, remonstratively.

"Oh, he is only an architect!" answered Mrs. Fay, skipping down-stairs.

But, though, being only an architect, Edward Graham was not worth having one's hair done up for, he was still of sufficient importance to be coaxed and wheedled, so far as Mrs. Fay's powers in that line extended.

"How good of you to be already seeing about it!" said the aged siren, as she sidled up to him, with her most amiable smile. "You know that time presses with me, don't you, and that, if others can wait, I, alas! cannot? I am sure you will not let anything else interfere now, will you? Can't I peep?" standing up on tiptoe to look at the note-book in his hand. "What! only ciphers! Oh, you dreadful Mr. Graham! don't you know that I am the most impatient creature breathing? Now, I am sure you will be indulgent to my little foibles, will you not?—and you will go to the library, and do me such a nice drawing this morning. I know you will!"

If the eyes which looked up at him so pleadingly had only been twenty-five years younger—if the disordered locks with which the morning breeze played had only been (as they once were) fair and shining—Mr. Graham could scarce have resisted such pressing entreaties. He uttered, indeed, no denial—nay, he actually condescended to yield so far to Mrs. Fay's request as to go to the library. Oh, how willingly would she have locked him up there! But, instead of sitting down and executing at once the nice drawing the impatient lady wanted, the faithless man, as soon as her back was turned, walked out into the garden, crossed the grounds, and, only stopping to ask the porter at the lodge the right way,

soon vanished down the shady path which led to Cowper's Hill. And let it not be supposed that Mr. Graham was going there unasked. Early that very morning he had received from Miss Cowper a pressing request to call upon her, and give her an opportunity of explaining her views on the Woman's Regeneration College. The wish of knowing how this Miss Cowper in the black cuirass could be mistress of Cowper's Hill, and in what relation she stood to the other Miss Cowper in black serge, who wanted to build alms-houses, induced Mr. Graham to comply almost immediately with the lady's request.

Mrs. Fay and her rival were next-door neighbors—the grounds of the one almost touched the flower-garden of the other, for Cowper's Hill was no more than an old brick house on a green lawn, with a background of tall trees. A servant in a plain livery showed Mr. Graham into a low, dark sitting-room on the ground-floor, took his card, and left him.

The young man remained alone so long that he thought he must surely have been forgotten. The house was very silent. He sat on a low ottoman. Through a window next him he looked on the sunlit lawn across which he had come; through the other, on the opposite side of the room, he saw the forest gloom of the fine old trees which sheltered the house from the northern winds. How cool and dark they looked, though only clothed as yet in the tender green of spring! What a fresh and dewy chillness was that which lingered beneath their spreading boughs! How birds could build their nests there generation after generation, and sing love-idyls spring after spring, while centuries glided by like years over the green heads of those stately beeches! Edward Graham loved fine trees. He loved them all the more that nothing he did or could do was like to them. He loved them in the depth of winter, when their boughs were laden with snow, or hung with icicles, and the stillness of death filled their deserted chambers; in the summer time, when they were as green palaces, wherein many guests could dwell; birds and insects who lived there in happy liberty; airy palaces, whose foundations the storm had never shaken, yet through whose leafy halls and galleries the breeze could freely play.

"We have outlived the dryads of my heathen fore-

fathers," thought Edward Graham, looking at the foremost and finest of the group of trees which had wakened those thoughts within him; "and yet was it so strange in them to create a link and find an analogy between a fair goddess and so noble and beautiful a thing as that tree yonder? Has it not the perennial freshness of ever-renewed youth, and is not its long life akin to immortality?"

He had no time to pursue those speculations—a door behind him opened, and he turned round as a lady, young, beautiful, and richly dressed, entered the room. He rose, she stood for a moment by the door which she had just closed, and in that moment Edward Graham thought, "This is the loveliest creature I have ever seen, and yet I have seen her before." Yes, surely, he had seen those rich brown tresses, with the little scarlet bow pinned among them, that snowy brow, those deep brown eyes, and that face of dazzling bloom, which concealed every imperfection of feature. He had seen them, but without the breath of life, without the kind though modest look, the soft shy smile that now greeted him.

"You have forgotten me, Mr. Graham," said the beautiful girl; "I am Lily—Lily Bertram," she added, reddening beneath his steady gaze.

"I beg your pardon," said he, reddening, too; "I knew you at once—not as yourself, but as the portrait of—of—" He hesitated.

"My great-grandmother," said Lily. "Yes, I suppose there is a likeness. Miss Cowper will be down very soon, Mr. Graham, and she hopes you will be so kind as to wait a few minutes longer."

Her manner was gentle but very composed. Her voice was sweet, clear, and refined—there was no awkward shyness about Miss Bertram, yet nothing could be more unlike the Lily whom Mr. Graham remembered than the lovely girl before him. She was scarcely above the middle height, and, though her figure had still the slenderness of youth, it had also the grace and dignity of early womanhood. Was this charming creature the raw, slipshod girl whom Mr. Graham had known?

Involuntarily he glanced down at her feet; only one peeped out from the edge of her silk dress—a little foot, daintily shod in a high-heeled and buckled shoe. Even the

pretty little brown hands of Lily Bertram were altered. They were now lily white, and sparkled with rings, and Mr. Graham caught the glitter of a narrow gold bracelet on her fair arm, and of a little gold chain and enameled locket around her soft, white neck. The years that had passed over Lily's brown head had worked a change as mighty as ever was wrought by the stroke of an enchanter's wand. And, surely, Time is the greatest enchanter this life of ours can know; for, while Miss Bertram, wondering at his silence, inquired after his aunt's health, and endeavored to open a conversation, Edward Graham, looking at her with ravished eyes, said to himself, with sudden and passionate regret: "Oh! fool, fool, I might have married her! This peerless creature, beautiful as a goddess, and in whose lovely face goodness and sweetness alike are written—she might have been mine!" He was entranced, and, though he made more than one attempt to rouse himself to answer Miss Bertram —nay, to enter into some sort of sensible discourse with her —the violence and the suddenness of his feelings conquered the effort of his will.

Who can account for that wonderful mystery, love at first sight? It seems too strange to be true, and it is a reality which can be blissful or tragic—which can gladden or destroy even more than two human lives. How does a man know that a woman whose voice he has scarcely heard is, and must ever be, the sovereign queen of his heart? He may be deceived. That queen's rule may be as brief as it was sudden, but while it lasts it is supreme. She is queen absolute, indeed, and need fear no rival in the present or the past.

If Miss Bertram secretly wondered at Mr. Graham's strange, disturbed looks and manner, she gave no sign of having read their meaning. Her own bearing remained very calm, and, with self-possession, though not more than became her years, she still spoke of his aunt to Miss Cowper's visitor.

"I have not seen her once since she brought me over from Dieppe," said Miss Bertram, with a wistful smile, which suddenly brought back to Edward Graham that little Lily in the cloak and hood who had looked in at him through the parlor-window of the "Trois Couronnes," and who had walked into the room with her bundle in her hand. "I have been educated in a convent in Somersetshire, and now I am

to go back to Saint Aubin as soon as I am of age. Miss Cowper has been very good to me," added Miss Bertram, in a low voice.

"But, surely, it was not Miss Cowper whom I saw yesterday?" said Mr. Graham.

"Oh! no"—and here a merry smile broke over Miss Bertram's face, and filled it with sunshine—"that was her friend, Miss Mortlock. This is Miss Cowper," she added, as the door opened, and a lady walked in.

Mr. Graham knew her at once, and yet Miss Cowper was very different from what she had been. She was older, of course, and she was stouter, too; but the alteration in her toilet was still greater than that in her appearance. Miss Cowper had discarded black serge and the mediæval costume for *moire* and velvet, and jewelry and laces, and it soon appeared that the change in Miss Cowper's ideas was more radical than even that in her attire.

"I am happy to see you, Mr. Graham," said the lady, sitting down with a great rustling of silk, and scarcely glancing at her visitor—"quite glad to renew our acquaintance. Thanks for coming so promptly. I want to explain some of my views to you. Cowper's Hill is a small place, but there is a great deal of land attached to it. I wish to build a college, as my friend Miss Mortlock has told you. I intend regenerating woman," continued Miss Cowper, with the cool modesty of most regenerators. "Woman is very low—indeed, her position is vile; but I am in earnest, Mr. Graham, and I mean to raise her."

Alas for the Miss Cowper in black serge, all whose proclivities were for the Middle Ages and sisters of mercy! She was gone, and nothing of her remained but the words "earnest" and "vile," which answered as well for the regeneration of woman by a college as for her relief by the building of almshouses. While she spoke, Edward Graham compared the present with the past, and he also looked at Miss Bertram. She sat leaning back in her chair, looking at the rings on her fingers, as her hands lay idly folded on her lap. Her downcast eyes told him nothing, but he thought he read a sad seriousness in her face, and, gazing at it, he became so absent that Miss Cowper, who had gone on discoursing, stopped short, and said, rather sharply:

"I fear you are not attending to me, Mr. Graham."

In a moment the young man was turned back into the matter-of-fact (earnest, Miss Cowper would have said) architect. What would Mrs. Fay's feelings have been, if she could have heard the faithless man, as he threw himself heart and soul into Miss Cowper's college? What would she have thought if, when Miss Mortlock came in armed *cap-a-pie*, even at that early hour, as Edward Graham thought, when he saw that she had already donned the black cuirass, the three began to speak of halls and lecture-rooms with the gusto of so many professors? Miss Mortlock, indeed, took the lead, and dictated, not merely to Miss Cowper, but to Mr. Graham himself; and he, base man, quickly perceiving that Miss Mortlock was the ruling power of the house where the lovely Miss Bertram dwelt, adhered to all her views with the degrading subserviency of his complaint.

"Of course, of course," he hastened to say, in answer to some preposterous assertion of Miss Mortlock's. "The building must be Elizabethan, as you so justly remark."

"Gothic would never do," remarked Miss Mortlock, looking severely at Miss Cowper.

"Gothic is the type of intellectual and moral darkness," complacently said Miss Cowper, gazing straight before her. Her look met that of Mr. Graham, but without the slightest recognition of that past in which Gothic had been a very different type, indeed.

"My dear Miss Cowper," reproachfully exclaimed Miss Mortlock, "how can you! Moral darkness! Do not you know that we have been in moral darkness all along?"

"I thought—" began Miss Cowper.

"No such a thing," interrupted Miss Mortlock, with the greatest decision. "The new moral law, as my brother, Professor Mortlock, has so often explained to you, is essentially a modern and recent discovery. A new light."

"Just like gas," remarked Miss Cowper, with great originality.

"Much more recent than gas," said Miss Mortlock, severely. "Indeed, when the college is built—which I trust will be soon—my brother the professor intends having the exact date of the discovery of the new moral law inscribed on a marble tablet of the great hall."

She spoke as if the college were the professor's property, and Miss Cowper, once so jealous of her independence

and her money, uttered no protest. Mr. Graham, rather surprised at the turn the conversation was taking, looked for Lily Bertram, and found that she had left the room. In a moment the spell which had made him forget time vanished, and, with a hasty excuse, and a most willing promise to call again, he left the two ladies.

As he went down the step of the perron, which led from the house to the lawn, he saw Miss Bertram walking along the path before him. He quickened his pace, and was soon by her side. She turned round on hearing his step, and seemed surprised to see him.

"Have you so soon settled all about the college?" she asked, with a smile.

"By no means," he quickly answered. "It will take many conversations to settle so weighty a matter."

"I suppose so," she said, absently.

They were walking along the path. How cruelly short seemed the space that divided them from the gate. From the first moment he had known what ailed him, what he had lost in the past, what he might win in the future, and, with the secret fear of strong desire, he now let every impulse of his heart centre on marriage as the only certainty. He had thought of little else while he was talking with Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock. He thought of nothing else now.

"If I do not throw the whole might and passion of my will in securing her," he said to his own heart, "some other and more fortunate man will assuredly step in and snatch away from me a prize so fair and so tempting. Who is that Professor Mortlock? Is he young or old, married or single?"

Whoever he might be, Edward Graham hated him, and also felt that he had no time to lose.

"This is no case for hesitation," he again said to himself; "I am in the prime of life; I have a good position; I earn a fair income; I can marry to-morrow, if I please." And he looked at her eagerly as they walked along the graveled path to the old-fashioned gate, with its two red-brick pillars and their vases of flowers spreading bright blossoms in the morning sun. Oh! if he could only ask her that very moment and have that terrible, that awful, suspense over, and hear that yea or nay which was to be his final sentence. But it might not be. She who walked by his side was guarded

by a lion as powerful as he who trod of yore in Virgin Una's steps. That spell of deep reverence without which there is no true love would keep him tongue-tied, not for that day only, but for many a day yet to come. He felt as if he would scarcely venture to touch the hem of her garment with a profane hand—how could he, then, imply by word or look that he felt for her the love which leads to marriage? She was to be wooed and won—ah! how slowly, if he might judge from the maiden grace of her whole bearing!

"And so you are going to improve the abbey, Mr. Graham," resumed Lily, after a pause.

"Mrs. Fay wishes for two wings," he said, "and, of course, Mrs. Fay must be gratified."

"Ah!"

She did not suggest that the task would keep him a long time at Saint Olave's, but he could not help giving her the information.

"I have to go back to town to-day," he remarked, "but I shall return to-morrow, of course."

He looked at her, but, though she said courteously, "How glad Miss Cowper will be to have you in the neighborhood!" his heart fell as he heard her.

The words were so coldly spoken. Mr. Graham might come or go—what was it to Miss Bertram? Could it be Professor Mortlock! He turned sick at the thought; but, no, it was not that. Only where was the free, outspoken little Lily of the days gone by? By what wonderful transformation had she become the silent and graceful lady through whose every look and motion breathed the modest dignity of a perfect woman? When he looked in her lovely face he lost all hope, and, when they parted at the gate and she turned back to the house, he gazed after her graceful figure, as she moved slowly through the sunshine, with a pang at his heart. "She did not loiter one second as she walked by me," he thought; "and now that I can no longer enjoy the precious moments, she lingers at every step she takes."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THERE is no change so complete as that wrought by a sudden and passionate love. Even the death of the most beloved, though it may break our very heartstrings, can scarcely affect man or woman so deeply. Death makes us poorer than we were; it robs us of all human hope and all joy, but it leaves our own selves unchanged. Not so love. That alters the whole being. It raises us to sublime heights of ecstasy, throws over life hues fairer than those of the sun of a southern clime, and, for a few days at least, it turns mere mortals into gods and goddesses—strong, fair, and exultant.

That fever was now on Edward Graham, and he went back to Saint Olave's no more like the man he had left it two hours before than darkness is to light. How had he lived till then? Had that been life—that cold, dull, gray, and joyless existence? All the fire and passion which he had inherited from his Italian mother, and which lay hidden under the reserve and pride of his birth and rearing, now broke out as the flames of a northern volcano may pierce their mantle of snow. Miss Bertram's lovely blooming face was with him all the way as he walked back to Saint Olave's through the shade and sunshine of a country lane. It was before him still as he entered the abbey and went up to his room. It looked in at him through the open window which framed a fair prospect of spring verdure and blue sky; no enchantment in the fairy stories loved by his childhood had ever been more potent than this. And he was so thoroughly bewitched that his present condition seemed the only natural one. A white, square letter lay on his table. He took it up; it came from his aunt. What could she be writing about? Mrs. Graham's brief note ran thus:

"MY DEAR BOY:

"Lily Scot and her mother will take tea with me next Tuesday, so do try and come. Lily is sweeter than ever.

"Yours truly,

"MARY GRAHAM."

With a smile of vague wonder, Mr. Graham asked him-

self what his aunt could mean. Lily Scot! Surely he had never loved her—never!—never! He had felt for her the preference of a young man for the first pretty girl whom he happens to meet; but love!—he almost laughed at the thought, while he dropped his aunt's note with a careless hand, that she or any one could call that lukewarm feeling love. Love! There was no love but one felt for one woman, and the feeling was as much above every feeling of the kind as she was above everything that wore woman's aspect.

The loud peal of the luncheon-bell called back Edward Graham to earth and Mrs. Fay. With a beating heart he felt that he was now in Mrs. Fay's power. What if she should change her mind, give up the wings, let him go back to town, and send him a check, with a note of polite regret for his useless trouble. He sickened at the thought! Miss Cowper's college was a dream, and he could not remain at Saint Olave's if its mistress chose to banish him! To his great relief, however, he found Mrs. Fay very cross at his excursion to Cowper's Hill, with which she had in some mysterious manner become acquainted, and all the more bent upon her wings, that she was wellnigh distracted with jealousy of her neighbors. Not giving him time to eat a mouthful, she attacked him with her usual impetuosity.

"Well, Mr. Graham," she said, "while I fancied you were drawing, you were gadding at Cowper's Hill. Don't tell me you were not," she added, raising her forefinger. "I am a fairy—people call me so, at least; and I am never mistaken. I know you were there. Too bad of Miss Bertram!"

"What had Miss Bertram to do with it?" slowly asked Edward Graham.

"She a beauty!" continued Mrs. Fay, irritably; "I deny it. She never was and never will be a beauty!"

It was impossible to hear such blasphemy without uttering a protest.

"Miss Bertram seems to me the loveliest young woman whom I have ever seen," said Edward Graham, coolly.

"Oh! if you call a good complexion loveliness," scornfully exclaimed Mrs. Fay, "she has plenty of it."

It was useless to argue, but oh! how his fancy went back to the witching face of Lily Bertram! How he saw once more the brown and golden hair with the scarlet bow, the

lovely eyes, the exquisite mouth and dimpled chin, which were all so charming! The beauty of perfect feature she might not have, but the beauty of color, of life, and light, is beauty, too, and this she had in a rare degree; and, surely, it was no lover's delusion that made him read sweetness and goodness in her every look and motion!

"There never was any one so sly as Miss Bertram," resumed Mrs. Fay; "she makes me bring you here, and then decoys you away—shameful!"

"I thought it was because you had seen the wing which Mr. Blake—"

"His wing!" scornfully interrupted Mrs. Fay—"as if I cared for the man or his wing! Why, I never saw it—I had not even heard about you," she added, with the cruel frankness of the rich and the strong, "until she put it into my head to enlarge the abbey, told me you were quite a great man, and all that, I find out now, to bring you here that you might see about Miss Mortlock's nonsense college. Don't talk to me of the regeneration of women," continued the pitiless old lady—"they will always be flirts from the beginning to the end of the chapter; and Miss Bertram, for all she is so demure, is no better than the rest."

Mr. Graham was pouring himself out a glass of claret. As slowly and as steadily as the rich red wine rose in his glass did a glow from his throbbing heart rise to his pale-olive face when Mrs. Fay spake thus. It was Miss Bertram, then—she who had seemed so distant and so cold—who had been the cause of his coming. He remembered how partial to him she had been as a girl, and an exquisite hope awoke within him. What though she was now as much above her past self as the sparkling diamond, fit for a sovereign king, is above the rude, though precious, stone which the miner finds in the darkness of the earth? What though he felt, in his inmost heart, that he was not worthy of her, his humility, though sincere, was not carried so far as to make him imagine that another man would be more deserving than himself? Another man! Never, if he had the power, should another man call his that Lily Bertram whom he—oh, madness ever to be regretted!—had rejected! "I might have had her!" Such was the burden of his thoughts all the time Mrs. Fay went on railing.

"I am very much obliged to Miss Bertram," he said, at

length; "but there are plenty of good architects in England. What could make her think of me?"

But it was plain, from Mrs. Fay's own answer, that Lily had not taken her into her confidence.

"Miss Bertram is like nobody else," she said, sharply; "she has made architecture her peculiar study, I suppose; for, though she is habitually silent, she becomes something of a bore when she gets on that topic. Somehow or other she wheedled me into it until I became as crazy as herself; but, if I had known that you were going to take up Miss Mortlock's college, and put my wings by, I would have let the abbey remain as it is, I can tell you."

"So you can now," he answered, smiling.

"Now, when I have set my mind upon it? No, Mr. Graham. I must never be balked, so you will have to cut Miss Mortlock and devote yourself to me."

He was amused by her imperative tone, and tried to pacify her by declaring that Miss Mortlock's—or, rather, Miss Cowper's—college was still so remote an event that she need have no fear for her wings. The ladies only wanted to expound their views to him. He did not add that, judging from the past, Miss Cowper's views were chiefly remote ones; but Mrs. Fay supplied the information.

"She is very slippery," said she; "mind that, Mr. Graham. She was all for almshouses once, and the Rev. Mr. Randon; and now she has dropped them both, become a rank infidel, and she is all for Professor Mortlock and a college. But she will build it in words—mind what I say, Mr. Graham—in words. Now, I am matter-of-fact, and you may rely upon *me*. But I am fickle," added Mrs. Fay. "I don't deny it, and you must make hay with me while the sun shines. I honestly advise you to have a contract, or that sort of thing, and tie me down while I am in the mood. Otherwise, *je pourrais vous planter là*, as our lively neighbors say."

"That would be a sad case, indeed," answered Mr. Graham. "But, then, I should have Miss Mortlock to save me from despair. A very superior person—Miss Mortlock," he perversely added.

"Superior!" almost screamed Mrs. Fay. "Why, she is the greatest donkey that ever lived—excepting her brother," kindly added Mrs. Fay.

Mr. Graham carelessly remarked that he did not remember the name of Professor Mortlock.

"Don't you?" said the old lady, with a shrill laugh. "Well, I am giving the set a dinner to-morrow, and you can see the creature, and hear him, too."

"But I am going away to-day, Mrs. Fay," calmly said Mr. Graham.

It was a bold card, but he risked it, and the event proved that he had played well. Instead of taking him at his word, and letting him depart, Mrs. Fay went nearly crazy at the suggestion.

"Going away! You can't, Mr. Graham. I want you. I can't let you go."

"But I must, my dear madam. I have an appointment in town for four o'clock."

"Send a telegram."

Mr. Graham shook his head.

"I know that, if you go, you will not come back," she said, dolorously.

Mr. Graham looked mollified, and seemed to hesitate.

"Oh! do promise to come back, Mr. Graham, do promise."

And Mrs. Fay clasped her hands and looked piteous. Mr. Graham still hesitated. She renewed her entreaties, and Mr. Graham yielded, and gave Mrs. Fay his word that he would return the following day. But it is hard to deceive a woman. Something Mrs. Fay must have seen, for, giving her guest a very sharp look, she added, abruptly:

"The professor is Miss Bertram's property, you know."

The blow fell as she had meant it to fall—heavily. Mr. Graham was stunned for a moment. There was a pause, during which Mrs. Fay watched him; then he said, calmly:

"Ah! I suppose they are engaged?"

"I should not wonder if they were," said Mrs. Fay, still looking hard at him.

But, though that look enlightened him, though he was almost sure that Mrs. Fay only spoke so to torment him, Mr. Graham none the less felt a miserable man at the thought of Professor Mortlock. Nevertheless, he rallied enough to say:

"I suppose the professor is a young man?"

"About your own age," replied Mrs. Fay; "and very handsome," she pitilessly added.

Mr. Graham looked straight before him, while a sickening fear crept round his heart and chilled the blood in his veins. Was it possible that this, the great, the first real love of his life, must perish in its very birth? He longed and he dreaded to see Miss Bertram and that hateful professor together. Should he keep his promise to Mrs. Fay, or break it? Not to know his fate would be hard, indeed, and yet suspense seemed more endurable than to stand by and read the cruel truth in Miss Bertram's eyes.

"Why should I go back to Saint Olave's?" was the burden of Mr. Graham's thoughts all the time he sat in the railway carriage, with his face toward London. "If she is engaged to that man, why should I undergo the torment of seeing her again?"

Easy question to put, not so easy to answer; for the next day, after dispatching some important business in feverish haste, Mr. Graham was back at Saint Olave's long before Mrs. Fay's dinner-hour.

"Oh, you darling!" cried the lady, delighted. "You have not given me the slip, after all. And now, do tell me, have you some brilliant idea? I mean something that I can understand, you know."

They were standing in the flower-garden, Mr. Graham not having yet entered the house.

"Is that heavy stone balcony on the second floor very dear to you, Mrs. Fay?" he asked, looking up at it as he spoke. "Because I should like, if it were practicable, to remove it. The thing is modern and in bad taste."

"The stone window!" screamed Mrs. Fay, turning up her pointed chin at Mr. Graham. "You would not touch the stone window! Why, every one goes up to look at the prospect. You must go up, too. You need only open the door at the head of the stairs, and go straight in to the end room. You will find the window there. Miss Bertram never comes to see me but she runs up to have a lookout. *I* have not been there for ten years. *I* don't care for prospects," added Mrs. Fay, with her shrill and unpleasant little laugh; "but you must not touch the stone window, if you please."

Mr. Graham bowed.

"Was Miss Bertram here the other day?" he asked, *rather* irrelevantly.

"Of course, she was. You don't mean to say you did not see her? To be sure, she and Professor Mortlock were together the whole time," added Mrs. Fay, thoughtfully.

Mr. Graham winced internally, but made no sign.

"Ah! you want to go to the library, I see," shrewdly said Mrs. Fay. "Well, Mr. Graham, I will not interfere with you any longer."

She waved her hand and left him, with the arrow she had launched still quivering in his heart. He did not go to the library; he wandered about the grounds restless and unhappy, until the sound of carriage wheels warned him that Mrs. Fay's guests were arriving. He then entered the house by a back door, went up to his room, dressed hastily, and, instead of joining Mrs. Fay and her friends, made his way up to the stone window. She might be there. He could not miss that chance of seeing her alone. He went up the broad stairs; he entered a room that was almost dark, then another, then one lit by a large window, rich with stained glass and images of saints and martyrs taken from the ruined chapel. Azure that seemed to come from Paradise, gold, purple, and crimson of rarest hue, fell on the floor of polished oak at the feet of Mr. Graham. Pale, unearthly faces, with a strange yearning in their upraised look and clasped hands—a look that seems to have passed away from humanity, as if it had ceased to long for divine things—told him their story of love and faith in vain. It was as if he had ceased to feel the beauty of color—as if he had forgotten that there is another world than this. Had she come, and was she gone, or was she coming still? The sound of a door, that opened and closed again, answered the question. He drew back. He felt sure it was she, and he was not mistaken. She came in quickly, with the light step of her years, and a rich rustling of silk, and the fragrance of the hot-house roses she wore in her bosom and in her hair came in with her too. Mr. Graham saw her fair face as she drew near, and he thought how like the lovely princess of the old fairy tales she looked in her radiant beauty.

"Allow me to open the window," said he, coming forward.

She gave a little start of surprise, which she quickly repressed. Her greeting was friendly, but quiet. The years which she had spent away from her own people and her own

land had altered her strangely. She had not grown cold, but she had learned that love was no longer her supreme right, and the warmth and pretty insolence of a beloved child had left her entirely.

"I believe the prospect is a fine one," said Edward Graham, without attempting to follow her out on the narrow balcony.

"I only come to look at the sea," she answered, simply.

She stepped out. He saw her slender figure looking dark on the warm evening sky as, turning to the east, she shaded her eyes with her hand, and gave a long, wistful look at the low, blue line which lay far away beyond the woodland landscape, resting beneath a pale ridge of clouds.

"You were looking for Saint Aubin?" he said, as she turned back.

She raised her eyes to his and answered, gravely:

"Yes, I look at the spot where I know it must be," and, with a bend of her head, she passed by him and left him there.

When the door had closed upon her, he went out and looked, too. The prospect was a fine one, but he did not care for it then. His thoughts flew back to the quaint Norman town, to the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, to the girl with the laughing face and the lively tongue, who had both amused and tormented him. Memory is a great deluder. She so holds her glass that we rarely see the past, unless with a light shed by the present. "She was charming even then," thought Edward Graham, and he forgot the tangled hair, the slipshod feet, the incessant chatter of Lily Bertram. He forgot, too, that, if she liked his company, he, alas! cared very little for hers, and, with the injustice natural to his altered feelings, he felt aggrieved at the calmness with which she now met and left him. Was Professor Mortlock —oh! hateful thought!—was he the cause of the change?

In a fever of jealousy and unrest, Mr. Graham went down to Mrs. Fay's drawing-room. It had been the refectory of the monks of Saint Olave's three hundred years ago, and, though successive generations had altered it strangely—though modern hangings, carpets, and furniture hardly suited those deep Gothic windows and that arched and lofty roof—the size and noble height of the old room made it imposing still. But Edward Graham scarcely gave it a look—scarcely

even did he let his eyes rest on Miss Bertram, so eager was he to know his fate at once.

There was no difficulty in singling out the professor, since he was the only man present besides Mr. Graham. He stood on the hearth, with his hand thrust Napoleon-wise into the region of his heart, talking in a slow, didactic voice to the two ladies who sat on either side of him. One was Miss Mortlock, in her black cuirass, for, like a knight of old, she rarely doffed her armor, and the other was Miss Cowper, so frilled, so puffed, and so dressed out as to be almost invisible. Mr. Graham bowed to the ladies, and Miss Mortlock hastened to perform the ceremony of introduction.

"Mr. Graham, I am happy to introduce you to my brother, Professor Mortlock," she said, with stately patronage. "Mr. Graham," she added, addressing her brother, "hopes to contribute his stone toward the noble edifice by building our college."

"I am happy to make Mr. Graham's acquaintance," kindly said the professor. Mr. Graham bowed coldly, and looked down on a man who was barely thirty-five, who was actually handsome, though he wore glasses, but who was so deplorably short that jealousy vanished at his aspect. That Miss Bertram should give even a look of her beautiful eyes to this absurdly undersized creature seemed impossible to Edward Graham in the pride of his six feet. "An actual pygmy," thought he, still gazing down on him; "no woman, in her senses, could think of him for a moment." Moreover, when the professor had talked five minutes, Mr. Graham felt that Mrs. Fay had not overstated matters when she stigmatized him as a fool.

"We mean our college to be a grand thing, Mr. Graham," said Professor Mortlock, with much dignity.

Miss Cowper, remembering, perhaps, that her money was to build "our college," thought she might put in a word.

"I am determined to raise woman," she said, "and a regenerating college is the earnest purpose of my life, Mr. Graham."

"A noble purpose," struck in the professor, "and I am proud to say, my dear madam, that you owe it to me. Woman is a most potent agent in social life, of which the only solid basis is science," continued the professor, "and as priestcraft is the natural enemy of science" (the professor

was a very open and outspoken man), "and as women are unfortunately priestridden—"

Mr. Graham frowned. Was the man a gentleman?

Miss Cowper did not seem affronted, but she interrupted this lucid explanation by peremptorily remarking:

"Not all, Professor Mortlock."

The professor, who was apt to go astray when he was interrupted, looked annoyed, and said, with some sharpness:

"My dear Miss Cowper, your partiality for your sex is commendable, but I am sorry to assure you that nine women out of ten are priestridden. It is their nature to be led, and—"

"I am sure it is not mine," again interrupted Miss Cowper, speaking warmly; "I could never endure being led, even when I was a baby."

"An admirable spirit," said the professor, with something like a polite sneer, "but a certain reverend pastor had other hopes, and actually boasted of what he was going to make a lady do for an asylum, I believe, or something or other. Of course, there was not a word of truth in it," continued the professor, as Miss Cowper became very red and sat up in her chair, "but allow me to assure you that woman, as woman, requires severe training before she acquires the moral courage to break through the bonds of priestcraft and learns to be free. Excuse me, I know what you are going to say," remarked the professor, authoritatively silencing Miss Cowper, who evidently wanted to protest, "and I assure you again that I have studied the matter too profoundly not to be master of my subject."

The professor looked convinced that Miss Cowper had not a word to say for herself. The lady, however, was of another opinion, and would certainly have answered him if Miss Mortlock, kindly pressing her hand, had not remarked, with evident compassion for her moral and intellectual weakness:

"Do not, my dear; you know you never can beat the professor in argument."

In short, it was plain that Miss Cowper, in order to escape being priestridden, must learn liberty under the wholesome discipline of Professor Mortlock.

"What, at it again!" cried Mrs. Fay, who sat at the other end of the room talking to Miss Bertram. "I will not

hear a word about the regeneration of woman until dinner is over—not a word, Professor Mortlock. My dear Miss Cowper, do not, I entreat you. You do not know what a deplorable effect argument has upon me. I always believe the last speaker, which is absurd."

The professor laughed as heartily as if Mrs. Fay had uttered the most brilliant speech; and his sister murmured, half aloud, "So clever!"

Disgust for the professor's reasoning, and contempt for his person and manner, would have kept Mr. Graham silent even if the mistress of the house had not so peremptorily closed the discussion. And now the two last guests—two single gentlemen of more than middle age, who had been asked to take as many ladies in to dinner—made their appearance. They were both bald, both red-faced, and both stout in person, and evidently, so far as any dangerous admiration of Miss Bertram's beauty went, *hors de combat.* Edward Graham gave them a look, then thought of them no more. Surely, despising the man as he did, he might have seen the professor give his arm to Miss Bertram and sit by her side with equal indifference. But this was not in his power. In vain Miss Mortlock and Miss Cowper, between whom he sat, talked to him about the college all dinner-time; he answered them at random. His eyes could not leave the two at the other end of the table. Miss Bertram was evidently both gay and amused, and the professor, who did not look so short as he really was when sitting, wore on his handsome face an expression of such placid content, that Edward Graham would have liked to annihilate him.

"Is it possible she should care for the man?" he thought, angrily. "Surely, no woman in her senses would!"

And then that tormenting demon who sits in a jealous man's heart reminded him that women are not always in their senses, and that Titania herself, who, as queen of the fairies, ought to have known better, had doted on Bottom, spite his ass's ears.

The bitterness of these thoughts was so far wholesome that, when dinner was over, and Mrs. Fay's guests met once more in the drawing-room, when he saw that Miss Bertram, though perfectly polite and amiable, had scarcely a look for him, Mr. Graham asked himself if it were not still time to withdraw from the fatal snare of her beauty? He felt that

this love, unless fully requited, would surely be the crowning misfortune of his life—that it would rob him of all energy and all strength of purpose, and, mayhap, leave him wrecked at last on those shores of honor and success which it had been the ambition of his life to reach.

"I shall leave Saint Olave's to-morrow," thought he; "and come back no more. Mrs. Fay's wings and Miss Cowper's college must find some other man. I will not give myself up to this madness!"

So spoke Prudence; but, when, after the guests were gone, after he had taken a last look of Miss Bertram's lovely face, and felt her little gloved hand rest within his with the friendliness of old acquaintance, when his heart was still throbbing with the pain of what might be a final parting, Mrs. Fay said to him, "Are not those Mortlocks horrid?" he revived a little, and his dark eyes sparkled.

"The man is not a gentleman," continued Mrs. Fay. "There are plenty of people, I suppose, who would not care to have him, but," added she, with her easy insolence, "what difference does it make to *me?* And then I like to see him making a fool of himself with little Miss Bertram. She will never have him, you know. By-the-by, Mr. Graham, I cannot let you go for a week," she added, suddenly.

"Then, if you cannot, Mrs. Fay," answered he, smiling, and his dark face glowing, "I suppose I must stay."

He forgot the work that was waiting for him; he forgot that, though she did not care for the professor, she might not, therefore, care for him. He forgot all, save that he should have the exquisite delight of seeing her again. A week, a blissful week, was before him. In a week, what might not occur? And in one sense he was right. This week was so far eventful that none other left such deep traces in his life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Four days had gone by.

Mr. Graham had had long and rather trying conversations with Mrs. Fay. Although, by so doing, he nearly drove that *lady* wild, he had other conversations at Cowper's Hill with

Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock. He worked hard at the wings of the one lady, and at the college of the other two. He was on the watch from morning till night. His eyes were ever ready to see, his ears ever ready to hear; and yet, to his secret wrath and despair, Miss Bertram remained invisible. This was not so strange after all; his business was not with Miss Bertram; but Mr. Graham, who staid at Saint Olave's for her sake, felt wronged and exasperated. And then he had not an easy life of it. Mrs. Fay and Miss Mortlock, in whose hands Miss Cowper was a passive instrument, gave him no peace. The rivalry between these two ladies ran so high that Mr. Graham would have found it impossible to stand well with both, if the extreme eagerness of each to keep a hold upon him had not proved his safeguard.

"I'll not let you go, you know," Mrs. Fay said, with her insolent frankness. "Mortlock sha'n't have you."

While Miss Mortlock imperiously declared that Mr. Graham could not allow the regeneration of woman to stand still for so contemptible a matter as Mrs. Fay's two wings. So intent were the two ladies on prevailing over each other, that the existence of other architects besides Edward Graham did not seem to occcur to them. In her anxiety to make sure of Mr. Graham's exclusive services, Mrs. Fay bethought herself of her old friend Mrs. Graham. "Dear me," thought she, "I must have her here."

So she wrote off to her dear Mrs. Graham, entreating her, for the sake of Auld Lang Syne, to come and spend a week at Saint Olave's. "It would be such a treat to see her again, especially as her nephew, Mr. Graham—such a superior man!—was now at Saint Olave's. She—Mrs. Fay—was adding two wings to the abbey," and so on. Unluckily for Mrs. Fay's plans, Mrs. Graham had just sprained her ankle when she got that letter.

"Oh! she has found out that there is something in Ned," thought Mr. Graham's aunt, indignantly. "She might have discovered *that* a little earlier in the day. Pity I cannot see the boy there tumbling the old place about."

Mrs. Graham's ideas of architecture were of the leveling kind; so, with a sigh of regret, she wrote back to Mrs. Fay. She was so much obliged to her old friend Laura; but she had sprained her ankle, and could not stir; and would Mrs. Fay be kind enough not to say a word of this to her neph-

ew? He was such a good boy that he might leave everything to come down and see her.

"The dear old goose actually believes it!" ejaculated Mrs. Fay, as she put Mrs. Graham's note by; and yet, lest Mrs. Graham should not have overestimated Mr. Graham's affectionate interest in her welfare, she prudently told him nothing of Mrs. Graham's accident.

Mr. Graham spent an unconscionable time at Cowper's Hill the next morning. Mrs. Fay felt that, if she did not adopt strong measures, he would be taken out of her hands. She wanted to go to town and see Léocadie, who was behaving abominably about that *cachemirienne*. Why should she not call on Mrs. Graham, and carry her off, sprain and all? "If it is a sprain!" thought Mrs. Fay, who was too much accustomed to white lies not to be of a skeptical turn.

But we all know what Léocadie is. Mrs. Fay, who drove to her first, wheedled, coaxed, threatened, and entreated, for an hour and more; then, having wrung from her a reluctant pledge that the *cachemirienne* should be forthcoming next week, she drove off to Hammersmith, and paid her old friend a brief and, so to speak, breathless visit.

She found Mrs. Graham in her pleasant parlor, knitting in the window, with her feet up on a stool. It was a real sprain, after all.

"My dearest creature," said she, rushing at once on the topic uppermost in her mind, "I am so glad to see you again, but so vexed about that horrid sprain. You don't mean that you don't know me! Why, I am Laura—Laura Fay. You must come down to Saint Olave's. It will do you all the good in the world. The air of Saint Olave's is the best air in England."

"For a sprain!" said Mrs. Graham, raising her eyebrows.

"For sprains, broken arms and legs, and everything of that sort," audaciously said Mrs. Fay, "so you must come. Tell your maid to pack up a few things, and come with me at once. We have just time to catch the express."

"No, Laura, thank you," composedly answered Mrs. Graham. "I like staying here best. And how is that boy getting on?" she asked, with a sudden fondness in her voice.

"Oh!" irritably answered Mrs. Fay, "he is a great nuisance, that boy of yours. What business has he to be always

at Miss Cowper's, talking to that awful bore of a Miss Mortlock about their nonsensical college? But I know; it is all for Miss Bertram."

"Miss Bertram! do you mean little Lily?" cried Mrs. Graham, her blue eyes sparkling. "A tall slip of a girl, whose hair is always tangled, and whose slippers are down at heel! Do you mean her?"

"No, no," cried Mrs. Fay, with an impatient rap of her fan, "I mean Miss Bertram—though Jones is her real name—of Saint What-d'ye-call-'em, in France, quite a little heiress, and a beauty, too, according to some people, but I don't think so; and Mr. Graham is dangling after her, instead of seeing about my wings, and I find it a nuisance."

"Is it possible that little Lily Bertram is a beauty?" exclaimed Mrs. Graham, amazed.

"I tell you I don't think so; but she has a color, and—"

"And you think Ned actually likes her?" said Mrs. Graham, clasping her hands at the thought. "My goodness! what a pity he did not marry her all these years!"

Here was a discovery for Mrs. Fay. Miss Bertram and Mr. Graham were old acquaintances.

"How sly of them," said she, sharply, "how very sly!"

"And do you think they are actually in love with each other?" asked Mrs. Graham, with her point-blank way of putting a question.

"Oh, dear, no!" said Mrs. Fay, laughing until her eyes twinkled. "It is only dangling! But, my dear creature, if you will not come, I must run off, or I shall miss the train."

She rose to go, but Fate had willed it otherwise. A double-knock announced the presence of visitors.

"Two ladies, ma'am," said the maid, opening the parlor-door, and, as she moved back to let them pass, Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock both walked in.

Mrs. Fay sat down again. She knew they had come to take away Mrs. Graham, and she resolved to miss the train, to miss dinner, to miss everything save sitting them out, and she at once declared her intention.

"Now there's a coincidence," said she, in her airy fashion. "I come to see dear Mrs. Graham, you come to see Mrs. Graham; but you don't go back to Cowper's Hill by the train? Yes. Well, then, so do I. Charming, and most amusing."

"I came to town on business of importance," said Miss Cowper, with some solemnity—she had come to ask Mrs. Graham to Cowper's Hill, being urged to this politic step by Miss Mortlock—"and, of course, I could not be in London without calling on Mrs. Graham."

"Just my case," said Mrs. Fay, still speaking airily. "How hot London is to-day!"

"London is always vile," said Miss Cowper, sententiously.

"My dear Miss Cowper," exclaimed Miss Mortlock, remonstratively, "think of what London is—the very centre of the intellectual world. It was in London that Professor Mortlock discovered—"

"Did he, really?" interrupted Mrs. Fay. "How interesting!"

"Discovered the new moral law," continued Miss Mortlock, getting very red. "And a place where Professor Mortlock—"

"Of course not," again interrupted Mrs. Fay, fanning herself. "I call that self-evident."

Mrs. Graham stared, but Miss Cowper, who was rather dull, only felt that Mrs. Fay would not go away, and that, if they staid much longer, they would certainly not be at Cowper's Hill in time for dinner. So, without giving Miss Mortlock time to utter a retort, she said to Mrs. Graham:

"We have such good air at Cowper's Hill!"

"Yes," innocently answered Mrs. Graham; "and Mrs. Fay says it is so good for sprains, broken limbs, and all that."

After such a speech, it was useless for Mrs. Fay to attempt concealing the real object of her visit, so she said at once:

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Graham, we have beautiful air, so do try Saint Olave's."

"And, if you would begin by Cowper's Hill," remarked Miss Cowper, "you would see Miss Bertram again. She often speaks of you."

"Dear little Lily," said Mrs. Graham, brightening. Then, with her usual candor, she added, "It seems that silly fellow, Edward Graham, is quite smitten with her."

"An old goose, if ever there was one!" thought Mrs.

Fay; while Miss Cowper, staring in calm indignation, uttered a solemn protest.

"I cannot believe it. Miss Bertram," she severely added, "is to think of nothing of the kind while she is under my care."

"I only said dangling, you dear, indiscreet creature," said Mrs. Fay, tapping Mrs. Graham with her fan, and winking hard at her, so that Miss Mortlock, who sat in silenced and outraged dignity, should not fail in intercepting and interpreting the signal. "She is a lovely girl, and Mr. Graham dangles after her while he is talking about the college. Men like to dangle."

"Not Ned," said Mrs. Graham, shaking her head. "There is no dangling about Ned."

"Very well, then, he don't dangle," pleasantly said Mrs. Fay.—"Miss Cowper, Miss Mortlock, are you going home this evening? Yes—well, then, suppose I drive you both to the station," she coaxingly added. "I always have my own carriage in London, you know—one of my whims."

This was a fact; and Mrs. Fay's horses were so good, her carriage was so comfortable, and it was so useless to try to sit her out, that Miss Cowper, who wanted her dinner, and Miss Mortlock, who wanted to keep a sharp eye on Miss Bertram—by her secretly destined to the professor—yielded to fate, and went off with Mrs. Fay, leaving Mrs. Graham thoughtful and perplexed.

How kind those people were; but how sudden was their kindness! Mrs. Fay and Miss Cowper had done without Mrs. Graham all these years, and now the dear, kind souls wanted her so badly.

"And yet, even if I had not sprained my ankle, I do not think I should have gone," thought Mrs. Graham, rubbing her nose; "yet I should like to see Lily Bertram, dear little Lily. I wish they had brought her; and so she is a beauty, and Ned likes her. Poor Lily Scot!"

There is a tacit understanding which does as well as any spoken compact. The three ladies did not utter the name of Miss Bertram as they went together to Saint Olave's and Cowper's Hill, but each knew what the other two thought, and each resolved that Mr. Graham should not have many opportunities of dangling after Miss Bertram from that day forth. And thus it came to pass that, when he called at

Cowper's Hill, Miss Bertram was either out or engaged; and that, when she went to Saint Olave's, she was so effectually kept out of his way that he knew nothing of it till she was gone.

This lasted four days. On the fifth, Mr. Graham resolved that he would bear it no longer. The morning was calm and fair. He took the *Times* out with him, and walked into the grounds. As he went through the high ferns, all sparkling with dew under the young shadow of the broad beeches and oaks, he brooded bitterly over his folly.

"I am only wasting life away," thought he. "Even if I saw her, what good would it do me? I am only losing those precious hours with which other men are now going to win both fame and money."

An article in the *Times*, which had caught his careless eye as he walked along reading, but thinking of Lily Bertram all the time, had so far compelled his attention as to suggest this sad and philosophic conclusion. From this article it appeared that a Polish prince of immense wealth had recently died in Paris, that he had left a will, by the provisions of which the greatest portion of his property was devoted to charities, and a large sum was set apart for the building of a funeral chapel in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, to be erected over his remains. Wishing this chapel to be all that architectural and sculptural art could make it, the prince had determined that both the chapel and the monument should be open to competition among all the architects and sculptors of the day, ten of the most eminent men of either profession acting as umpires, and, to tempt even men of known genius and fame to compete, the prizes awarded for the best drawings and models were munificent.

"A hundred thousand francs—four thousand pounds—for the chapel," thought Edward Graham, pausing beneath the cedar-tree, as he turned back to the abbey, and looking dreamily at the little lake before him. "It would have been the making of me when I came here ten years ago, for, then, thought and leisure were worth very little to me, whereas, now, if some other man should win the prize, my time and my labor would both be lost. Besides, I should think of and do nothing else—leave this place at once, affront Mrs. Fay, and, perhaps, never see *her* again, until I found her married to some Professor Mortlock or other."

The cruel fear won the day. Why risk so much for a doubtful good? What did he want with money? Did he not earn plenty? But, then, the honor, the fame, whispered Ambition. He had been successful, he had been praised and spoken well of, but he knew in his heart that he had not yet shown what he could do, and set his name on any work of note. Nothing would remain to tell future generations, "This was a man." Such a monument as this, erected in a famous place in a great city, was even more a prize for glory than for four thousand pounds. The thought set his brain on fire. Looking at the lake, he saw with the mind's eye a Gothic chapel, white as alabaster, rise from its still waters, and shine in the morning sun. Its slender and graceful columns supported a light canopy, beneath which the Polish noble slept on a bed of stone, with the cross which his forefathers had borne so high against the Turkish infidel clasped on his breast.

"Oh! what a noble, what a grand thing I could make of it!" thought Edward Graham, walking up and down in a sudden fever, from which every dream of love had vanished. "I will, I must risk it!"

A heavy foot creaked on the gravel. Mrs. Fay's footman, in sober livery, and with the gravity of his station written in his stolid face, was coming toward him.

"Mrs. Fay's compliments to Mr. Graham, and would he kindly let her have the *Times* for Miss Bertram, who wanted to see something in it?"

No oracle spoken by Fate was ever more potent. The warm blood rushed to Edward Graham's olive face, and dyed it crimson. He had forgotten her, for a moment only, but he had forgotten her, and all the time she was there, in that house near which he stood; and, though he could not intrude on her presence, he could so loiter near the door through which she would come forth, that he must see her—walk with her to the gate, perhaps—at least, look in her face as she went by. The Gothic chapel, with its fair white columns and its light arches, the dead prince sleeping forever with the cross on his breast, vanished at the thought. They faded into the air before that fervid vision of love as the morning mists, which were floating away from the quiet lake, melted before the warm sun. Edward Graham forgot all, save that for four days he had not looked in her face, and

that now the chance he was staying at Saint Olave's for had come at last.

Miss Bertram's visit to Mrs. Fay was a very long one. In vain Mr. Graham walked up and down in front of the house; then, fearful of attracting attention, went and sat on a bench in the avenue. She did not appear. He lingered under the shadow of the broad trees in a fever of impatience, which left no freshness in the morning for him, and the irritation of his disappointment was getting beyond endurance, when the nimble little figure of Mrs. Fay stepped out through one of the dining-room windows, opened a sunshade, and flitted about the flower-beds—alone. The truth flashed upon him—Miss Bertram was gone! Had this been done on purpose? Burning with useless wrath, and vainly trying to smooth his dark brow, he went up to the mistress of the house, and made an effort to say, carelessly:

"I thought Miss Bertram was with you."

Mrs. Fay raised her eyebrows, and perked up her chin.

"Miss Bertram!" said she; "why, she has been gone for ages. She left as soon as she got the *Times*. I hope you do not want it. She will send it back in an hour. I wonder you did not see her," perversely continued Mrs. Fay; "we saw you quite well walking up and down in front of the house. Were you waiting for her? I should not wonder if that were not why she asked to go out through the library. Take my advice, Mr. Graham," kindly continued Mrs. Fay, daintily offering him a rose-bud, "put that sly little Miss Bertram out of your head, and do not let her make fun of you. Mind the thorns—they prick."

It is well that good-breeding is such a despot, and bends the proudest and the sternest—ay, and the angriest, too, of a certain class, at least—to its iron will. Mr. Graham had to bear this impertinence and not retaliate. His foe was a lady, and he could not say to her, "You have done this on purpose against me. I do my best to please and serve you, and you would blight my life and its dearest hopes for your own selfish pleasure. She is nothing to you—you do not care whom she marries. Her weal or woe is of less value in your eyes than the flower you have given me in mere mockery, and yet you would rob me of all I care for—and for what—for what?"

These were Mr. Graham's angry thoughts while he took

Mrs. Fay's rose-bud, and looked in her faded face, and read mischievous amusement in her twinkling eyes. He would not, however, have deigned to answer her unkind speech, if she had not added, coaxingly:

"Are you going in to draw? Am I to see anything new to-day?"

"I fear not," he answered, stung into rebellion. "I must leave by the two o'clock train."

There is something in the calm sternness of a man's will which subdues a certain order of women as completely as if their frail fingers were crushed in his strong, careless hand. Mr. Graham was so quietly determined, so evidently resolved not to be moved from his purpose, that Mrs. Fay was cowed at once, and said, piteously:

"And when will you come back?"

"I really cannot say," answered Mr. Graham, in a tone which meant, "Perhaps never."

Mrs. Fay could have cried with vexation. "I should have liked to slap that man in the face," she declared, later.

"But you will do something to that poor drawing, to that poor elevation," she persisted—"something before two o'clock. Let me, at least, see those two unfortunate wings on paper."

"I fear even that is not in my power," replied the inflexible architect. "I shall have no time. I must call on Miss Bertram. I am going to France, and she may have some message which I could deliver—some errand which I can fulfill. I am sorry to disappoint you, Mrs. Fay, but, as soon as I can spare a day or two, I shall see about your two wings," graciously added Mr. Graham.

Mrs. Fay looked lugubrious.

"But I want more than that," said she—"I want to talk to you about the rooms in those wings. I want you to be here on the spot, and put it all in train. I want to have no worry about it at all," said Mrs. Fay, raising her shrill voice.

"Very natural," confessed Mr. Graham, looking amused.

"And when will you come back from France?" she asked, crossly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Graham only knew that he was going—he had no conception of the time when he should return.

"And you are going to call on Miss Bertram now?" This was said very indignantly.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to call on Miss Bertram.

"You will not see her," coolly declared Mrs. Fay. "Miss Mortlock is keeping her up for Professor Mortlock, and I will wager my two wings," triumphantly added Mrs. Fay, "that you will not see Miss Bertram to-day."

"Then I shall write to her," answered Mr. Graham, hiding his secret irritation under a calm smile.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Fay, as if struck with a sudden thought; "would you mind taking just three lines to Miss Mortlock? It would be such a kindness, Mr. Graham."

"Now, what is the wicked little fairy thinking of?" wondered Mr. Graham, even while he civilly declared that he should be charmed to be Mrs. Fay's messenger.

"I shall not detain you a moment," said Mrs. Fay, tripping into the house; indeed, she soon came back with a slip of paper in her hand. "Oh! you may read it," said she, handing it to him with the twinkle in her eye—"indeed, you must read it. I would have given you the message, only I do not think you would have delivered it honestly."

Mr. Graham cast his eyes on the daintily small though erratic writing of Mrs. Fay, and read the following lines:

"DEAR MISS MORTLOCK: Please to tell Miss Bertram that I have changed my mind, and shall stay at home next week. Mr. Graham says he is going away this afternoon—keep him, if you can."

Mr. Graham smiled.

"And do you think Miss Mortlock will keep me, if you cannot, Mrs. Fay?" he asked.

"She is a very superior person," answered Mrs. Fay, demurely quoting his own words; then, with some uneasiness, "You will be sure to give my note to Miss Mortlock—you won't cheat?"

Mr. Graham laughed, and protested he was incapable of such treason; but, though he laughed, he walked away with keen resentment at his heart. How sure Mrs. Fay was that he would be foiled in the object of his visit! Was it a settled thing that he was never even to look in Lily Bertram's face? Were these two women, who detested each other, and whose rivalry had both provoked and amused him, agreed against him in that one point?

On reaching Cowper's Hill, he found that Mrs. Fay had not exaggerated matters. The footman was not sure whether Miss Bertram was at home or not, but would see.

Mr. Graham was shown into the sitting-room where, a few days before—was it only a few days?—his fate had met him under Miss Bertram's witching aspect. He sat down where he had sat, and again looked out at the deep gloom of the old trees; but this time no fair face, no graceful form, came in to break on his meditations. Miss Mortlock alone appeared, gracious, indeed, but most unwelcome.

"So sorrry both Miss Cowper and Miss Bertram are out," she said, with a smile; "but *I* am quite at your orders, Mr. Graham. Some new idea about the college, I suppose? I shall be so happy to give you my best attention. Dear Miss Cowper is very delicate, and I feel it a duty to relieve her as far as I can."

So saying, Miss Mortlock sat down, gave a little hitch to the black cuirass, which was decidedly awry, and, taking out her pencil and note-book, she prepared to listen to Mr. Graham's new idea. He heard her out; all the time she was speaking, his eyes were fastened on the vista of trees before him, watching the glimmer of a light skirt far away. He saw it going farther and farther, and he knew that with it vanished his last solitary chance of seeing Miss Bertram. Mrs. Fay was right—she had been sent out of his way.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said he—alas! what a prodigious number of untruths lie at the door of that fair, false dame, Politeness—"but the fact is that I came, on the contrary, to say good-by."

Miss Mortlock was amazed—indeed, more amazed at first than angry. It seemed impossible that Mr. Graham should desert the college. Of course, if he was going, he would soon return. But Mr. Graham would not pledge himself. He was going to France, to Saint Aubin, probably, and he had asked to see Miss Bertram in order to offer her his services.

"Oh! Miss Bertram has nothing to do with that miserable little Norman place now," impatiently said Miss Mortlock. "I hope we have weaned her from all that. Miss Bertram, indeed, does not appreciate the college. Only, what can you expect from a girl reared up in a convent? But I trust she has given up Saint Aubin. And, surely, my dear Mr. Graham, you cannot leave us in the lurch to go there? My

brother, Professor Mortlock, is going to give a series of lectures in all the great towns of England, Miss Cowper, Miss Bertram, and I accompanying him, of course. We leave this evening, and we really want to have that matter of the college settled by the time of our return."

But, though Mr. Graham was perfectly civil and conventional, he was also cool and inexorable as a rock, and could not be moved from his resolve of leaving Saint Olave's by the two o'clock train.

"But, Mr. Graham, you ought to consider," said Miss Mortlock, with some heat. "Miss Cowper is a most excellent person, but it is very hard to bring her to the point; and, if you go now, the college may just end in nothing."

Mr. Graham, remembering the almshouses, smiled, confessed such might be the case, but remained obdurate, even though he delivered Mrs. Fay's note, which, as confirming his departure, Miss Mortlock read with much chagrin. In short, so far as the college was concerned, the interview ended as unsatisfactorily as Mr. Graham's attempt to see Miss Bertram, and that such was the case was the comfort he derived from his visit at Cowper's Hill.

He went back to Saint Olave's sad and depressed. It is all very well to say that Faint Heart never won Fair Lady; but, when Fair Lady is made inaccessible to Faint Heart by all the conventionalities of civilized life, Faint Heart has a very poor chance, indeed, and he knows it.

"How can I even let her guess what she is to me, when I cannot so much as see her?" thought he, despondently. "A princess would scarcely be more out of my reach now than that little Lily Bertram, who was always by my side in the days gone by."

If anything could add to his torment, it was this contrast between the past and the present, the remembrance of what might so easily have been, the bitter consciousness of what was. He found Mrs. Fay lying in wait for him when he returned to the abbey.

"Well," she cried, breathlessly, "has Miss Mortlock prevailed upon you?"

"That was impossible," he civilly answered.

"You gave her my note, of course?"

Mr. Graham had done so, of course.

"And you saw Miss Bertram?" innocently asked the lady.

Mr. Graham dryly confessed that he had not had that pleasure.

"And yet you told her that you were leaving by the two o'clock train?"

Mr. Graham, whose patience was sorely tried by this cross-examination, merely bowed.

"Too bad of Miss Mortlock," resumed Mrs. Fay, her eyes twinkling with amusement. "Come, now," she coaxingly added, "shall I be the good fairy? Go to town for the day, and come back to-morrow. I shall have Miss Bertram to dinner. You can have your talk with her, and go away again by the eleven o'clock train, if you like. You will probably travel with Professor Mortlock and the two ladies. They are all going to town for the lectures. Only naughty little Miss Bertram stays behind with me."

He looked at her in eager and breathless hope. Was she deluding him, or did she speak the truth?

"There it is, all settled," said Mrs. Fay, avoiding his look. "You go to-day, come back to-morrow to dinner, and leave by the eleven o'clock train, if you still have that crotchet of going to France. So nice! Never say that I am an ill-tempered fairy after that."

And, without giving him time to answer, Mrs. Fay walked away. The bait was not one which Edward Graham had the fortitude to resist. To see her again, to be in the same house with her, to have every chance which daily intercourse can give! Ah! Mrs. Fay knew what she was doing when she set this trap for him!

Of course, he went to town, and, of course, too, he came back long before Mrs. Fay's dinner-hour; but he did not see Miss Bertram until he entered the drawing-room a few minutes before the bell rang. And she was there, sitting by Mrs. Fay's chair, with the fading sunlight casting its warm radiance round her brown hair, and giving even more than its usual light and life to her lovely face.

He had meant to be quite cool and calm, but it was not in his power. The blood rushed to his heart, and left his olive cheek almost colorless as he saw her. She looked slightly surprised, but perfectly collected.

"Ah! you did not think to see Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Fay, airily. "Well, my dear, since you are going to stay with me while the professor and the two ladies are lecturing,

you can study architecture under Mr. Graham. The dear creature is not going to France after all. He has changed his mind, and will see about my two wings," added Mrs. Fay.

And now was the real crisis of Edward Graham's fate. He had but to say a word, abide by his first resolve, turn his back on Saint Olave's, and thus break the bonds of a passion too ardent to promise him aught save sorrow—he had but to do this to be free. There would have been a sharp pang, but, once it was over, all would have been well again. Had he not life, its ambition, its struggles, its troubles, and its rewards before him? All this he knew. He knew, too, that by remaining he was risking in some degree the pride and the dignity of his manhood. Mrs. Fay, bent on keeping him, had, like a cunning spider, woven this web for his unwary feet. She was tempting him cruelly and unworthily, as she had balked him before for her own ends. It stung him to read the twinkle of amusement in her eye. He read, too, the vague wonder in Lily Bertram's face—a wonder that told him how unexpected, how unwelcome, perhaps, was this change of plans. But what availed it all? His silence implied the fullest consent. Passion was stronger than prudence, than pride, than aught else in Edward Graham's heart. She had her day and her hour. He would struggle against her, but it would be too late. She would have left upon him that sign of an all-engrossing feeling which no after-years can ever efface.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

And now there followed for Mr. Graham a strange life of fever, love, work, and unrest. He saw Miss Bertram daily, but Miss Bertram had grown shy, and kept very much in her room; and Mrs. Fay, though she had used Miss Bertram as a lure, by no means intended that this young lady should usurp the place of her two wings. Moreover, Mr. Graham had business in town, which compelled him to go to and fro constantly, and he invariably learned when he came

back that the golden opportunity he longed for had been while he was away. But the patience that knows how to wait, the strong will that knows how to watch, can do much. A few chances Mr. Graham succeeded in getting, and he made the best of them; and, to Mrs. Fay's ill-concealed wrath, these chances evidently took up Mr. Graham's whole mind and leisure while they lasted.

"Of all bores in a house, a man in love is decidedly the greatest," thought Mrs. Fay, in her exasperation; "but I may thank myself—I ought to have known better. I ought to have known that I had no chance of my two wings while Mr. Graham was mooning after that sly little Miss Bertram."

There was some truth in the accusation. Mr. Graham's wings were like Penelope's web. In his fear of finishing his task too quickly and having to leave Miss Bertram's presence, he was either always undoing what he had done, or suggesting improvements which first pleased, then perplexed, and finally provoked Mrs. Fay. If she had only known when he was right, she would have stopped him and said, "That will do," but she felt too fearful of committing some fatal mistake to do more than worry her guest, and herself, too, to her heart's content. He wanted to make love to Miss Bertram, did he? He was staying at Saint Olave's for that, was he? Well, she, Mrs. Fay, would allow of no such thing, and he should have her society as well as Miss Bertram's. Accordingly, she punished herself by interfering with Mr. Graham's desires in every way she could. It was very disagreeable, of course, but there was some comfort in it; it made him miserable! Love, however, is full of wiles, and Mr. Graham deluded the lady's watchfulness in the most provoking manner. The irritating contest did not render him, however, more docile to the lady's wishes, nor willing to please her, and it was generally when she had balked him in some perverse manner or other that Mr. Graham discovered those imperfections in his original design which caused Mrs. Fay to wish that she had never thought of her two wings, and even made her wonder sometimes why she did not give them up altogether.

And how did Miss Bertram feel or act betwen these two? One ever bent on seeking her presence, the other on disappointing him perpetually? It was hard to say. If she saw

Mr. Graham's admiration, she never betrayed that she did so. If she was aware that Mrs. Fay interfered with it, or reduced it to that unspoken language over which she had no control, Miss Bertram showed neither pleasure nor discontent. She neither sought nor avoided the friend of her youth. She seemed pleased to see him, but she did not appear to miss him when he was not by. There was no sign of regret in her face when he left the room, no sudden lighting up when he entered it again. "She does not care one pin about him," thought Mrs. Fay, with vindictive satisfaction, and, alas! Mr. Graham was wellnigh driven to despair by coming to the same conclusion ten times a day. And yet he did his best. Love has many subtle arts, and Mr. Graham was too desperately in love not to know them all by intuition. One of them lay in evoking the past every time he could do so. He had been quick to perceive that this past, concerning which she was so silent, was very dear to Miss Bertram. Her dark eyes would grow dreamy, her pretty mouth would smile tenderly, when he made some gentle and remote allusion to Saint Aubin. He avoided all painful topics, but such as were pleasant and cheerful he was ever bringing up in some fashion or other, and one morning he ventured, for the first time, on reminding her that, in that past so dear to her, he, too, had had a part. He had seen her in the garden, walking slowly through the gay flower-beds, and Mrs. Fay, detecting his look (they were both in the library), had perversely said, "No, Mr. Graham, not now, if you please; my claim is prior to Miss Bertram's."

Mr. Graham had submitted, chafing inwardly, but relief had come under the shape of a morning visitor. Mrs. Fay, though much provoked, had left him, and, of course, Mr. Graham had at once walked out and joined Miss Bertram.

Her greeting was friendly, but he fancied she would as soon have been alone as have had his society. He did his best to entertain her, and she heard him with courteous attention, but she spoke little in return.

"You are very silent, now, Miss Bertram," he could not help saying.

"Am I?" and she looked at him wondering; for we are seldom conscious of such changes in ourselves.

"You were so different in Saint Aubin," he persisted.

"I was a child, Mr. Graham."

"You always had some pretty story or other to tell me then," he resumed, and there was something like reproach in his tone.

"I believe I was a great chatter-box," she answered, carelessly.

"No, no," he denied; "but you did tell me pretty stories."

"What a dreadful little torment I must have been!" said she, laughing outright; and the sweet, clear laugh made Edward Graham's heart leap like some joyous music, all the more welcome for being so long unheard.

"A torment!—you were delightful company," he answered, both warmly and sincerely; for we readily forget unwelcome truths. "There was something so perfectly original and fresh in all you said," he tenderly added.

"And did you really like it?" she asked, looking at him in some doubt.

"I would give anything—anything to go back to that time," he said, so vehemently—for he thought of his lost chances—that, though she could not understand his meaning, she blushed like a rose.

And so they stood silent for a moment, face to face, with the flowers in the garden opening their fragrant bosoms to the sun, with the gay hum of insects in the air, and a soft twittering of birds in the neighboring trees—so they stood, feeling that something had been told, though what it really was Lily Bertram could not have said; and Edward Graham himself scarcely knew. The bright blush died from her cheek, her eyes became absent and dreamy, as they often did when he spake thus of the old by-gones. She seemed to be looking back into the past, seeking there the last joyousness of her youth.

"It is all so long ago," she said, with a half sigh; and, without looking at him any more, with her eyes bent on the earth, she slowly walked away. He watched her graceful figure, her long gown trailing on the gravel path, till she entered the old abbey and vanished. "It is all so long ago!" His heart sank within him; the words seemed his sentence—that something beyond which there can be no appeal.

"Where is the use of staying here?" he thought, bitterly. "It is all so long ago! There is a ten o'clock train. I

will go by the ten o'clock train—nothing—nothing shall make me stay to endure these torments!"

He entered the house in that despondent mood. As he was going up-stairs to his room he met her coming down from hers, dressed, and with her little hat on.

"You are going out for a walk?" he said, pausing, with his hand on the banisters.

"Only to sketch the little chapel," she answered.

"May I go with you?" he asked, with sparkling eyes.

Miss Bertram replied demurely that she should be very glad of his company. It was half-past nine, but the ten o'clock train need never have been on the time-tables that morning so far as Mr. Graham was concerned. Mrs. Fay's morning visitor staid an hour and more, and for that hour Mr. Graham ought surely to have been blest in Miss Bertram's society; but the sting of her indifference still rankled in his heart. "I am only a link in the past for her," he thought—"no more. I will not speak of the past again till I am something in the present." But silence, complete silence, is very hard sometimes, and, before ten minutes were over, Mr. Graham broke through his resolve in the manner and on the topic which he had least expected to lead to any self-betrayal.

"Mr. Graham," said Miss Bertram, addressing her companion, who sat at some distance from her, pretending to sketch, too, but looking at her all the time. He was by her side in a moment.

"Pray, what portion of this chapel belongs to the sixteenth century?"

"Not a stone of it," he answered, unhesitatingly. "It is all pure thirteenth."

Miss Bertram looked surprised.

"Then I suppose I misunderstood Mr. Cowper," she said.

A sudden flash came to his dark eyes.

"Do you mean Miss Cowper's nephew?" he asked.

"I know no other Mr. Cowper. He was here three years ago, and we looked at the chapel together."

Edward Graham laughed with scornful amusement.

"Mr. Cowper has forgotten architecture in the law," he said, his old enmity rising within him.

"But Mr. Cowper is an architect," she persisted—"an architect in Saint Aubin."

True. How had he forgotten it all this time? Alas! how was he forgetting everything?

"And, if Mr. Cowper be an architect now," he asked, in sudden mistrust, "why does Miss Cowper want me for her college?"

"Miss Mortlock objects to Mr. Cowper."

"And well she may," he could not help saying.

"You do not think he has talent?" suggested Miss Bertram.

"I do not think he has honesty," answered Mr. Graham.

He could not bear to hear her lips utter his name; he could not bear to think that he had stood by her side on that very spot; he could not bear to remember that, when he, Edward Graham, had refused little Lily Bertram's hand, her dying father had turned his thoughts toward Richard Cowper. Ancient animosities, quickened by a jealousy which he did not even attempt to govern or subdue, breathed in every word he now uttered.

"Do not wonder if I speak strongly, Miss Bertram," he resumed. "I have known Mr. Cowper years, and I know what I am saying. It sounds mean and base to take his good name from Miss Cowper's nephew—does it not?—but he who was not honest at fifteen will scarcely be so at thirty-two."

Miss Bertram no longer made any pretense of sketching. Her book lay on her lap, her pencil was idle in her hand.

"You surprise me much," said she, coloring. "I hope, for Miss Cowper's sake, that you are mistaken."

"Mistaken!" he echoed—"mistaken!" he repeated. "Shall I tell you how and why I accuse him? I have never told living creature—not my own dear aunt, Mrs. Graham. Shall I tell you?" he added, sitting down by her side—he had been standing till then.

She looked at him like one perplexed, yet also fascinated by the earnestness and vehemence of his manner.

"Yes," she answered—"that is, if you like."

"We were lads together. We both studied under the same master, an able man, but not a just one. He did not like me, and I hated him, yet, in the competition between his seven pupils, I was sure of being first. It is not vanity in me to say so. We all knew it, and, though Dick Cowper was his favorite, he could have no chance against me. Our master was a little, deformed man, whose ill-temper was written

in his face. I amused myself with drawing a caricature of him, and it was a very cruel one, for it was true—so true that I had grace enough to show it to none save Cowper. He advised me to burn it, and I did so at once in his presence. How was it, then, that our master called me in one day, taxed me with this caricature, and summoned me to produce it. I could not, of course, but I did not deny. Thank God! I was even then man enough not to deny. I was expelled at once, and it was Dick Cowper's drawing which won the day."

That was all, and yet Mr. Graham had told the story of that unforgotten wrong of his youth as bitterly as if it had comprised within it the drama of a lifetime. Miss Bertram had heard him with a startled face.

"O Mr. Graham! could he—could any one have been such a traitor?" said she. "Only think—perhaps no one told the master; he may have seen your unfortunate caricature—"

"He never saw it!" interrupted Mr. Graham, "for he did not describe it accurately, like one who speaks of what his eyes have beheld, but confusedly, like one who speaks from hearsay. Moreover, when I showed it to Dick Cowper, he had burst out laughing, saying, 'The old monkey himself all over!' and, when my master taunted me with my sin, he added, 'There are young monkeys as well as old ones, Mr. Graham.'"

"And yet Mr. Cowper may have been innocent," gently pleaded Lily.

"He was not," again interrupted Edward Graham, for it was more than he could bear to hear her lips utter that detested name. "He was guilty, not through heedlessness, but through design. He wanted to prevail over me, and he succeeded. He got the reward of honor for which I had striven. He is clever, if you like, but idle. It is easier to betray a secret than to work ten hours a day," added Mr. Graham, with bitter contempt.

There was a pause; then he resumed:

"I never meant to tell this. I never told any one. *Cui bono?* I could not prove it. I felt that then. I feel it still; and, if it were not to you, I would not have spoken now. But let me add a few words. Forgive me for being so personal. I cannot help it just now. The wrong that

boy did me followed me for seven weary years. Until my master died, I had in him a bitter enemy, who threw many a stone in my path, and made it harder than I can say. As to the wrong itself, I do Dick Cowper the justice to believe that he has forgotten it. He must have committed many a petty treason of the kind. Besides, he is very good-natured. He can injure a man and not bear him malice. He makes untrue the Italian proverb—*Chi offende, non perdona.* But, somehow or other, his appearance since then has ever been the signal of misfortune to me. When I meet him I know that trouble is nigh. I have learned to dread his presence, to detest his name, to feel a sort of abhorrence, for which I cannot account. Am I wrong in judging his manhood by the baseness of his boyhood? Perhaps so; yet I think not. I do not believe in radical changes, unless as I believe in miracles—as exceptions. Saul may become Paul, and the persecutor be turned into an apostle—but the case is a rare one. The boy is father to the man. And now forgive me for all this. I feel how ill-timed it is, and in what bad taste; but, when I hear of the man as being in the profession with me, something is wakened within me—not envy—he is not worthy of it—but a detestation of the mere thought that we two should ever meet again, or have anything in common."

Miss Bertram did not answer, but she looked at him with a sort of fear in her white face.

"O Mr. Graham! can you believe in that presentiment?" she could not help saying.

"I do. I am sure that we are antipathetic natures—that we cannot help clashing when we meet, and that our two paths can never be too far apart."

She heard him with grave and sad wonder.

"Ah, what will you—what can you—think of me?" he exclaimed, pained by that look. "I have been mad to speak so. I have shocked and, perhaps, grieved you."

"I am sorry for your past trouble," she answered, after a pause, "and also for Miss Cowper. She likes her nephew. I should like him to be good, for her sake."

"Good he cannot be; but he may be good enough to satisfy her. Surely, my dear Miss Bertram, you can have no illusions about Miss Cowper?"

Miss Bertram looked gravely in his face, as she said:

"Miss Cowper has been very good to me, Mr. Graham."

Then, without giving him time to answer, she added:

"My effect is gone—I can work no longer;" and, closing her book, she rose and walked away, leaving him there abashed, mortified, and miserable.

"I have offended her," he thought, bitterly; "and what for—what for?"

He went and picked up the little sketch-book, in which he had been stealthily drawing Miss Bertram while she was intent on the chapel, and entered the abbey very much crestfallen.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHENEVER Edward Graham lost heart with Miss Bertram, Mrs. Fay's two wings were his refuge. He generally made them undergo some severe treatment, some radical change, which served the double purpose of relieving his mind by work, and of giving him a pretense to prolong his stay at Saint Olave's. True to this rule, he entered the library a little before luncheon, bent on one of those improvements which so disturbed Mrs. Fay's equanimity; but, fortunately for the lady's peace, Mr. Graham could not fulfill his unkind intent.

Miss Bertram was in the library. She sat reading in one of the deep windows, where many a studious monk had read in the olden time. She leaned back in her chair—a low one; a book lay in her lap. Her eyes were fixed on the page. She did not even raise them when the door opened, and he entered the low, long room. His heart throbbed with mingled joy and pain. She was so cold, ever so cold, and now she seemed displeased.

"Could she not give me even one look?" he thought, stung at her indifference. "What is Dick Cowper to her?"

He was sitting down silently in his usual place at the table, when she suddenly addressed him:

"Mr. Graham," said she.

In a moment his papers were pushed away, and he was by her side.

"You know the old part of Saint Aubin better than I do. Pray, tell me something about this."

He looked over her shoulder. De Renneville's volume lay open on her lap at a highly-finished engraving of one of its most picturesque houses.

"Where is this?" she asked. "I have forgotten." And she looked up not unkindly in his face.

"It lies behind the brown house," he answered; then he could not help adding, "I did not know Mrs. Fay had De Renneville."

"It is not hers, it is mine," answered Miss Bertram. "Mr. Cowper gave it to me three years ago," she added, coloring faintly.

Mr. Graham bit his lip, and felt tempted to move away, but his good angel helped him to prevail over the jealous feeling, and to say, even calmly:

"Did you see much of Mr. Cowper three years ago, Miss Bertram?"

"I only saw him for a few days, when I came to his aunt's," she answered.

"Because," he continued, "I must apologize for all I said this morning. Mr. Cowper may be your friend, Miss Cowper certainly is—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "Miss Cowper has been very good to me, and I was sorry, Mr. Graham, to hear you speak slightingly of her. Think of all she has done for me," she continued, warmly. "She received me, she protected me against Mr. Lennard; when he refused to let me have a shilling of my own money, she supplied all my wants with a most generous and liberal hand. The money I can and shall repay, of course, but the kindness, Mr. Graham, can I ever repay the kindness?"

Mr. Graham's brow cleared. She did not seem to care for what he had said about Richard Cowper, and concerning Miss Cowper he was willing to make any excuse.

"Pray forgive me," he entreated. "Yes, Miss Cowper has been very kind to you, I confess it, but, would not my dear aunt have done as much, if Miss Cowper had not had a prior claim?"

Miss Bertram smiled, and looked very like little Lily.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she said, leaning her cheek upon

her hand, and looking dreamily before her, "how well I remember her!"

"And how glad she would be to see you!" said he.

"Everybody has been so good to me," she continued. "What claim had I on Miss Cowper, or any one?"

"You had every claim," he said, a little vehemently. "Miss Cowper only did what others would have been too glad to do."

"Mr. Graham," she asked, reproachfully, "why do you not like Miss Cowper?"

"Indeed, I appreciate Miss Cowper's good qualities," he answered, rather embarrassed between truth and Miss Bertram. "She is kind, but is she wise?"

Miss Bertram looked distressed.

"I know what you mean," she said, in a low tone. "It makes me very unhappy to listen to the strange theories she has adopted; but she is very good to me, for all that."

"I wonder how you can bear it all," he said, a little dryly. It was not in nature to hear Dick Cowper's aunt always praised for her goodness.

"Why should I not bear it?" she retorted. "It startled me very much at first, and then I remembered that He who is all-seeing and all-wise bears, and loves, and forgives as well. It would be strange if I could not bear it. Little Sister Martha, who lived with such cross old children, used to say to me, 'What are we here for but to bear?' and she was right. I am not old, but life has already taught me that lesson."

"A hard one," he could not help saying.

"Not so hard, if we will only remember one thing. 'We do not understand.' That was another of little Sister Martha's sayings: '*Ma petite*, we do not understand.' How often I think of it when I hear them all settling everything so positively! How can they tell? I wonder. Every one else was mistaken before they came, they say; then may they not be mistaken, too? If they would only remember that, perhaps, they cannot understand. When Newton died, he felt like a child who had picked up a few shells on the sea-shore, but all these men and women call their shells diamonds of the finest water. And yet, take that strange delusion from them, and they are kind, good-natured, and, in some things, clever. Only," she added, smiling shrewdly up in Mr. Gra-

ham's face, "there is not a Newton among them, nor yet a Sister Martha."

"Of course not," said Mr. Graham, delighted to find that Professor Mortlock stood so low in Miss Bertram's estimation; "they have not the humility, without which there is no genius, nor yet the large heart, without which there is no charity. They are small."

"And very foolish, if I may say so," added Miss Bertram, doubtfully.

"Indeed, you may," he cordially answered.

He felt light and happy. Never before had he and Miss Bertram conversed so confidentially as on this morning. It seemed to him as if, by laying bare before her eyes the great weakness of his life, he had established a hold upon her; even as, by speaking so openly to him, she had given him a right which, otherwise, he would not have dared to claim. Why not improve this golden opportunity? why not lead her again to that past in which they had been so friendly and so free?

"How well I remember the day when you took me in to see Sister Martha!" he began, musingly, and as if that day had been one of the brightest in his life.

"Did I take you to see her?" asked Miss Bertram, opening her eyes in sincere wonder.

"Have you forgotten it?" he exclaimed, in a tone of plaintive reproach which only made her laugh.

"I really have."

"And I forget nothing—nothing of that time," he said, in a low voice.

She colored very much.

"I beg your pardon," said she; "I know there is much to pain you in your remembrance of Saint Aubin, but, if I live to be my own mistress—"

"Pray, do not say a word of that!" he exclaimed, uneasily; "it is all put by. I was a struggling man, then; I am a successful one, now."

"I know you are, Mr. Graham, but you suffered in your affections as well as in your prospects, and my poor house was the cause," she sadly added.

"Not at all. Miss Scot and I parted for other reasons, and I have no doubt that for both it was best." Then, seeing the look of wonder in her face, he audaciously added: "A

man's first love is rarely that by which he must abide. He seldom fails to commit some fatal mistake. *She* may be perfect, but *she* is not the one in whose life-long companionship he can be really happy. I remember a pretty story which you told me long ago, Miss Bertram. You came one day, bright as a sunbeam, and broke in upon me, exclaiming, 'O Mr. Graham, only think, Eve was Adam's second wife, after all!'" He looked rather triumphantly in her face as he said this, but his triumph was turned into discomfiture when Miss Bertram calmly answered:

"You have forgotten the best part of the story, Mr. Graham. Adam would not have his first wife because she was too noble and too good, and Eve, the second wife, only led him into temptation and sin. So, at least, says the Jewish story, meaning, I suppose, to show the wisdom of a first and the error of a second choice."

Mr. Graham bit his lip and tried to slip out of the difficulty by saying:

"I beg your pardon. I remember that Miss Scot was your friend."

"Yes; but that is over," interrupted Lily. She rose as she spoke. De Renneville fell from her lap on the floor at her feet. Mr. Graham stooped to pick it up, and Mrs. Fay, who had been hunting for the pair all over the garden, and in every arbor or shady spot near the house, entered the room and found them there. She looked at Lily's flushed face, at Mr. Graham's papers lying neglected on the table; his chair, still standing nigh Lily's, betrayed where he had been sitting; then she tried to smile, and say, cheerfully:

"You dear man! You were at my wings, of course. And what are you going to do to them now?" she asked, in dolorous anticipation of some bewildering change.

"I am going to renew them, Mrs. Fay," he answered, seriously; for, if ever Mr. Graham had been determined not to leave the abbey, it was now. So, while Lily quietly left the room, Mr. Graham explained to Mrs. Fay the wonderful improvement he was making.

"And yet the other thing was so pretty," said she, pitifully.

"Then have it, if you like it best."

But no, Mrs. Fay could not do that. On second thoughts, she fancied that Mr. Graham's last view of the two wings

was so much better than its predecessor; only, how long would it take him to elaborate it?

He seemed to reflect.

"I have gained much to-day," he was thinking. "In two or three days I might speak and not seem too presumptuous —but no, that is too soon. A week, it must be a week, at least."

"Well!" said Mrs. Fay, imperatively.

"Well, by next Friday morning you shall have it all quite clear and ready."

"Mind you keep your word, Mr. Graham." And she raised her finger.

"She means it," he thought, gnawing his lip as he pretended to look at the papers on the table. "I have a few days, no more, and then Miss Bertram will pass out of my life as if she and I were beings of different spheres."

Twilight reigned in Mrs. Fay's drawing-room—a soft twilight, still and dreamy; white mists floated over the vague landscape; the glow of a rising moon filled the sky above the low woods that inclosed the abbey. Mr. Graham stood in an open window, looking out. Miss Bertram sat on a low chair, far away, and at the other end of the room Mrs. Fay lay back in her chair, fast asleep. And hers was no mock slumber, but a real after-dinner sleep, soft and deep.

"A lovely evening," said Mr. Graham, coming back to Miss Bertram's chair.

"Beautiful!" she answered.

There was a pause.

"You have been to look at the sea from the stone window," he resumed. "I saw you from the grounds."

"I go there every day. I want to get a breath of air from Saint Aubin."

"Then you do mean to return?"

"Mean it! The very day I am free I hope to stand once more on Norman soil."

She spoke with a vehemence very unusual to her.

"Are you sure you will like it so well when you go back?"

He put the question gently, yet not without a certain reproachful impatience. He could not bear her to be always pining for a land and a people that were foreign to him. She laughed a low, amused laugh—the laugh of little Lily.

"Of course, I shall," she answered, in a gay, light voice, which regard for Mrs. Fay's slumbers subdued. "Shall I not be glad to see the clear Norman sky, to feel the keen Norman air, to look at the dingy houses, so brown and so old, at the apple-orchards, at the pasture-fields, at the river shining like silver or gold through it all? Of course, I shall be glad."

"And you will like living there all the days of your life?" he asked.

"Ay, verily, all the days of my life," she answered, with a gentle mockery.

She seemed light, gay, and happy at the thought. He could not see her well, but he knew how she looked, and what light, both mirthful and dreamy, there was in her dark eyes.

"Yet you have not been unhappy in England," he could not help saying.

"Not unhappy, but lonely," was her quick reply.

"My dear Miss Bertram, what will you find in Saint Aubin now?"

"I shall find the dead," she answered, in a tone of sudden sorrow.

"Ah! but your lot is with the living," he could not help exclaiming. And, then, how was it that the great secret of his heart broke from him, not in many words, nor yet in eloquent ones, but still in words about which there could be no mistake and no error, for their burden was, "I love you." He had not meant to speak so soon. He had meant to wait and win her heart, then lay his at her feet, but passion had proved too strong for patience, and now it was done, and his fate was in her hands; and, even in the twilight, and even though his heart and brain were so full of his own strong desire, he could see how pale and startled was her face. She was silent awhile, and during those few moments the room seemed as still as death.

"Why have you spoken?" she said, at last, and her voice was both sad and low. "It was so pleasant to talk over the past with you. And now it is all over!—all over!"

Her head sank upon her breast, and she clasped her hands wearily upon her lap.

Before he could answer, the timepiece struck eight with a clear, sonorous ring. A door far away opened, the foot-

man came in with two lamps, one for each end of the room, then withdrew. Mrs. Fay had not awakened. Mr. Graham had gone to a table to look at a book. He now came back and stood once more by her chair. He looked very calm, but the hue of ashes had spread over his face.

"All over! Why so?" he asked, quietly.

"Miss Cowper has my word that I will never pledge myself till I am free," she answered.

"Is that all?" said he, his eyes sparkling with sudden relief. "I will wait a year—seven years, like Jacob—half a lifetime, if need be—anything, everything, so I have you."

She looked at him with strange, sad wonder, then he saw the color deepen on her cheek.

"No," she answered, "even that cannot be; for, though you waited, I might still have to say 'no' at last. You must not think of me, Mr. Graham, till I am free, and then—then— No, it must not be," she added, more firmly, and she looked steadily in his face; "it would not be right."

"You cannot mean it!" he said, his heavy brows darkening—"you cannot mean that I am not to think of you, because, if you do, I cannot obey you. Think of you I must; all I can do is to be silent, if speech offend you."

"O Mr. Graham!" she answered, looking at him with a sudden fear, and deprecatingly stretching out her hands, "do not be angry—I would not offend you—I only wish to do what is right—that is all."

He gazed down at her in perplexity. She looked at him very kindly. There was no severity in her eyes, in her voice, in the meaning of her expressive face; and yet, when, kindling with sudden hope, he said, "Then I can wait, like Jacob," her face fell, and, looking away, she uttered, sadly and firmly, the inexorable word "No." He walked up and down the drawing-room in silent but terrible agitation. He forgot Mrs. Fay and the inevitable sound of his steps on the carpeted floor. He only thought that he had heard his sentence—that sentence which he had once resolved, with a man's pride, should not pass twice a woman's lips for him. Once, as he stood near the door, he stretched out his hand to go forth and leave her presence forever; but, if he was a proud man, he was also a stubborn one, and he could not give in without another desperate effort. He went back to her chair, and, standing over it, he said:

"Do not punish me too severely for the one error—for the one fatal mistake of my life."

"What error?—what mistake?" asked she, wondering.

"Oh! if you know, will you—can you forgive me?" he exclaimed, sitting down by her side. "I should not tell you if I were wise. It is madness, and yet I must—yes, I must, even though you should scorn me, as you well may when you know what a miserable fool I have been."

Her dark eyes met his in grave and silent wonder.

"But what is it?—what do you mean?" she asked again.

"I mean that, when I last went to Saint Aubin, I was called by Mr. Bertram. He wanted to make atonement to me for the past; he also wanted to save you from trouble and sorrow, and he asked me to marry you. Lily, Lily, forgive me! I put by from me the greatest good, and it is the torment of my life to remember it. Forget that, Miss Bertram—forget and forgive it. Only remember that the father you so loved would have given you to me, and that but for my wretched mistake you might actually have been my wife all these years."

She seemed to waken from a heavy dream.

"And so that was what my father meant!" she said, at last. "He said something to me, and so that was what he meant!"

"Assuredly," answered Mr. Graham, with a beating heart. "You were very young—you loved him much. Am I wrong in thinking that you would have obeyed him?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then you would have married me?"

"I should have obeyed him, Mr. Graham."

"Then do so now," he entreated—"I mean, remember that he would have trusted me with your happiness; then have in me the same faith which he had."

She hid her face in her hands, and he heard her weeping in the still room. "Père—père bien aimé," she said, brokenly, in French, and again her tears flowed. But, when she spoke, it was to say:

"No, Mr. Graham. I would have obeyed him then, but I do not know what his will would be now."

"But you would have obeyed him then?" he persisted.

He felt a tormenting and irritating pleasure in thinking, as he looked at her, that, if he had married the pale, slender

girl of seventeen, the beautiful and blooming young woman of twenty before him would have been his wife.

"It is useless to go over the past, Mr. Graham," she said, with some pride. "You did well not to have me then—not to bind yourself to a foolish girl for the sake of a little money; for, in myself, what was I worth? But I am right, too, in putting all that by. Forget that my dear father ever offered me to you, and only remember that, though we may still be friends, we must speak of this no more."

He remained silent for some moments, during which the ticking of the old clock behind him sounded loud and clear. When he spoke, it was in a calm and altered tone—so altered, indeed, that, though he took her hand, she did not withdraw it, but looked at him wondering.

"I forgot myself," said he; "forgive me—forget it, even. Only remember that we were friends years ago, and for the sake of the past bear with me. Since I must not speak of what I feel, I will be silent—till you are your own mistress; but, on the very day, the very moment you are twenty-one, I will ask you for that yea or nay which you must not, it seems, give to me now. Do not speak—do not tell me that I need not wait—that I can get my answer now. Be patient with me, and be kind. Let me hope till the day comes when I can hope no longer. I ask for no more."

She did not answer. Not one word passed her lips; and with that tacit consent he let her hand free, and, as he did so, he could not help feeling a great throb of hope and joy at his heart.

There was a moment's silence, then Lily made some indifferent remark, which Mr. Graham answered in the same strain; then Mrs. Fay woke up with a little yawn, and said:

"Dear me! have I been asleep all this time? And how have you amused yourselves? With architecture?"

Had Mrs. Fay been asleep, indeed? She woke so opportunely, when the play was over, that one cannot help thinking she had been in for the last act at least. But, though Mr. Graham looked at her keenly, no twinkle in her eye betrayed an amused consciousness of what had passed. After all, the room was large, and she might have heard nothing. But, then, her hearing was keen, and she was too old a woman of the world not to know how to keep her coun-

sel at times. If she had heard them, she certainly acted her part to perfection.

"Never get old, my dear," she said, dolorously, addressing Miss Bertram, who had risen and gone up to her side; "never get heavy and stupid and sleepy in the evening. Be young, my dear—be young."

And she patted kindly the little hand that lay in hers, and looked as innocent as a dove in a wood.

CHAPTER XL.

The afternoon was hot, but the grounds around Saint Olave's were shady, and such freshness as trees and water give they had. Mr. Graham, who had been working hard all day, went out toward five, when a little breeze rose, cooling the sultry air. He walked down a narrow path on the other side of the lake, and he was soon deep in a little glade, where a shallow brook flowed softly over pebbly stones, and ferns rose tall and green on its banks, and trees spread their dark-green boughs so wide that scarce a glimpse of the blue sky could look in. It was a lovely spot, but Mr. Graham was not thinking of its beauty. He was thinking that, since he had spoken to Miss Bertram two days before this, he had not once had the chance of seeing her alone. She had not to his knowledge entered the library; she had not, so far as he could see, gone out of the abbey, unless under the shadow of Mrs. Fay's jealous wing.

"She avoids me," he thought, with a bitter sigh; "that is all I have got by speaking." And, raising his eyes, he saw her coming toward him, with her eyes cast down, and a bunch of ferns in her hand, and gleams of sunlight playing on her fair face. He stood still; she came nigher, looked up, and, seeing him, blushed and seemed troubled. He went up to her, and as he stood by her side he could not help exclaiming, "At last!"

When Miss Bertram exacted, and Mr. Graham promised, that there should be no speech of love between them, both were sincere, and meant to abide by the pledge; and yet by

both it was now as thoroughly broken as though it had never been made; for he spoke, and she listened, and he pleaded, and she did not chide until, wakening as from a dream, she said, with startled face:

"But, Mr. Graham, you forget. I have not promised. I must be free till I am twenty-one."

"And when will you be twenty-one?" he asked, with an impatient sigh.

"On the seventeenth of next September."

"At least twelve weary weeks more!" said he, so gloomily that she could not help laughing, and gayly asked:

"Do you want me to get old?"

"I want to have you," he answered, with a suppressed passion that checked all her mirth.

"You may never have me, Mr. Graham," she said, with a pale, grave face.

He gave a start, but, rallying quickly, he answered, with studied calmness:

"I cannot believe it. You are in all my thoughts, in all I do. I cannot take up a book but I find in it something that speaks of you. I was reading of Pompeii to-day. Have you ever been there? No. No more have I; and yet this whole day I have been haunted by two words which some learned man or other found on the walls of Pompeii, scribbled there eighteen hundred years ago. Two words old as the hills, fresh as the morning. May I tell them to you, or shall I wait till the seventeenth of next September?"

"If they were written eighteen hundred years ago on the walls of Pompeii, why should I mind hearing them to-day?" she answered, with careless pride.

"They are not much. Only two Latin words. *Suavis Amor*. Will not your Italian help you to that Latin? But, as I read them, I thought, For whom were they written? Was she dark or fair? Had she a pale or a blooming face? And —and, indeed, Miss Bertram, I could not help it, but it seemed to me that she for whom *Suavis Amor* was written must have had brown hair and dark eyes."

"I dare say she was like Lily Scot," said Miss Bertram, with a flash in those dark eyes which he was praising.

At first he felt as if she had struck him, and then his look kindled and his cheek flushed, for there is a meaning in jealousy which he who loves is quick to read.

"You do not think, you cannot believe that I ever felt for her anything like what I feel for you?" he exclaimed. "No, you must know better—you cannot believe it."

"You would have married her, Mr. Graham," she said, very coldly. "The feeling has passed away, I grant it; then what you feel now may pass away too."

"Ah! you are very cruel," he could not help saying, and the look of pain in his face smote her to the heart. She looked at him very sadly.

"I do not wish to be unkind, Mr. Graham; I only wish you not to set your heart upon what may never be. I am only a girl like another, and surely—surely—you should not forget all the trouble that has come to you through me."

Her looks were so gentle, her tones were so kind, that pain fled and hope revived as he heard her.

"Yes," said he, smiling, "our two lives have been curiously mingled together. Even my dear old auntie saw it, and told me once that you were the thread of gold woven in the warp and woof of my life."

Miss Bertram colored deeply and asked how Mrs. Graham could have said that. And then, unable to resist the temptation of ever reminding her of what might have been, he told her, even though it was against himself, how, if he had heeded his aunt's counsel, she, Lily Bertram, would have been his.

"Yes, I know, I know," she answered, with a troubled face; "but Mrs. Graham was all wrong. I was no thread of gold to you, Mr. Graham, only the cause of much sorrow; please Heaven that I may not be so still."

"How can you talk so?" he asked, vehemently. "The past I have got over; and what is there in the future I cannot conquer? You must not pledge yourself for so many weary weeks' time, but when the day comes you will give me my answer. Why should it not be yes?"

She did not contradict, she did not deny. They had been walking as they spoke and had reached the cedar-tree. Its dark boughs spread over them, and the lake lay at their feet. The languid air went past, laden with the perfume of flowers from the garden. It was all so sweet, so fair. Here, too, a lover's hand might have written *Suavis Amor* on the walls of the ruin behind them, for future generations to read the words and wonder how was she who inspired them—a maid-

en dark or fair, with the beauty of the day in her bright face, or the tender sweetness of the night in her aspect? But all at once Lily seemed to awaken from her dream, and, looking at Mr. Graham, she said, very firmly:

"Remember that I am free."

Free! The word smote his heart. He could not bear it. He looked at her with sudden anguish. Was it possible that she meant to escape him at last?—that on that fated seventeenth of September she should look wonderingly in his face and ask him what he meant? He cast the thought from him with a sort of angry despair. She had promised nothing, but oh! how gentle and how kind had been her looks! She had promised nothing, but how patiently she had listened, how mild had been her very chiding when she did chide! Surely, surely, no rival would spring up during those weeks of suspense. If there was truth in the language of a woman's face, Lily Bertram was his forever and ever.

"I will never give her up," he thought, with a throb of passion at his heart—"never, never;" but aloud all he said was, for she stood as if waiting for his answer:

"Yes, Miss Bertram, you are free."

She bowed her head gravely, and they both walked in and met Mrs. Fay on the threshold of the abbey.

"Oh! you heroic people," she said, "to be out in this heat! How can you bear it? I hope, however, my dear Miss Bertram, that you have given up your idea of going to high mass to-morrow. Your church is so far, and the sun is so hot, and I dare not ask John to go out on a Sunday.—My coachman is very strict," she added, explanatorily, looking at Mr. Graham as she spoke.

The next day was Sunday. The last Sunday Edward Graham had passed in town, but this he was to spend at Saint Olave's. He looked at Miss Bertram. Should he venture on proposing to escort her to the little town of Saint Olave's, which was, indeed, rather far away? Something in her pale face forbade it; but, though he was silent while she said with a smile that she did not fear the heat, his mind was at once made up. He would go before her, not to seem to be following her, and even she could not find fault if he walked by her side on the way back to the abbey.

"Ah! you will have your way, you will," said Mrs. Fay, and she shook her head over Lily's obstinacy, and

watched her close till dinner was over, soon after which Miss Bertram went up to her room.

Mr. Graham did not see her the next morning. Indeed, he almost avoided doing so. He went out quietly at half-past nine—high mass was at ten—and found Mrs. Fay in the flower-garden.

"Going out?" said she, inquiringly.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to Saint Olave's.

"To church?" suggested the lady.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going to church. But the expected taunt that he would bring home Miss Bertram did not pass Mrs. Fay's lips. She only looked at him with her twinkling eyes, murmured something about her wretched health and want of strength, then with a sigh of gentle envy went in; and, while church-bells rang sweetly through the silent land, Mrs. Fay, who was not so strict as her coachman, John, took up a novel and went to sleep over the first volume.

If the mistress of Saint Olave's thought that it was merely to walk home with Lily Bertram that Mr. Graham went out on that sunshiny Sabbath morn, she was mistaken. To a man in love there must be something of lost paradise in being in the house of God with the woman who is dear to him; but, though, as he walked alone through the green country, Mr. Graham certainly saw a beautiful girl in a pale-pink muslin, light and clear, with a little straw hat and a bunch of rose-buds lying in the clusters of her rich brown hair as if they would like to sleep forever in that lovely nest, though he saw her as if she stood before him, yet, even without the hope of her dear companionship for his return, he would have gone to Saint Olave's that morning.

Edward Graham had inherited not merely his Italian mother's creed, but also that simple faith which is the secret strength of the Italian race. It has faults, and great ones—what race has not?—but its hold on the invisible world is strong and deep. Mr. Graham could no more have parted with this attribute of his mother's people than with the Italian cast of his features. The waters of unbelief might roll around him, they could not shake his steadfast Roman nature, strong as a rock, and in some things as hard.

In one of the quiet streets of Saint Olave's, with the shops all closed, and the brown brick houses looking asleep in the sunshine, Mr. Graham found a little Gothic church,

white and new, and already nearly full. High mass began soon after he came in, the organ pealed in triumphant harmony, and, when the gospel had been read, a young Dominican monk, in a long, white robe and cowl, went up into the pulpit and preached the sermon. It was brief, emphatic, and full of meaning; but to Edward Graham, who looked as well as listened, the young monk's sermon was especially in his whole bearing and aspect. He was pale and thin, and might have looked austere, but for the spiritual brightness of his face. In it you read the story of one who, having given all up, had received all in return. So could you imagine Saint Francis of Assisi to have been, the tender and loving soul who had renounced creatures, and yet to whom created things were inexpressibly dear, for the sake of their Maker. Edward Graham could not help envying him. Even in that storm of passion which had seized his being so suddenly, he felt that he was being borne down to dangerous depths. Miss Bertram was young and fair, and he would have staked his life on her worth, as a jeweler would stake his on the value of a diamond or a rare pearl; and yet a secret voice told him that the love he felt for her was a peril and a snare. "Enlighten me, O God!" he asked, with fierce anguish; "shall I give her up—it is time yet—or shall I go on—on and be undone?"

Alas! no answer came, the sermon was over, a great stillness fell on the hushed congregation, a voice of love, praise, and prayer rose from earth to heaven; then the priest gave the last blessing, and Edward Graham, standing in the porch, watched the congregation pouring out till the church was empty. Miss Bertram was not one of them. With bitter mortification and wounded pride he thought, "She came to an early mass in order to avoid me. And why should I seek her?" he asked of himself, as he walked home alone; "why not abide by the test she has chosen, and wait? Time will prove the strength of my feelings and the truth or falsehood of what I read in her face yesterday. Why should I be such a slave? That monk is younger than I am by four or five good years. The passions which beset youth have knocked at his door and pleaded to get in; what convent cell, what human heart has escaped them since the world began? And yet he has withstood them all. The unlawful wishes of our fallen nature he has merely scorned. The

desires which all men may indulge in, of domestic love given and returned, he has put by. Did he feel the terrible risk of binding himself to a creature however lovely and perfect, and did he, therefore, seek that supreme good, that eternal and ever new beauty, as Saint Augustine has called it, which never yet deceived? Surely, surely, without carrying renunciation so far, I can at least save my manhood and my pride; I can do for honor something of what he has done for Heaven; I can take Miss Bertram at her word, and, hard though it may be, obey her."

Such thoughts could not have come to a man whose strong love was returned, for the love we give and which is given back to us has a foretaste of that heaven from which it has descended. But the love which is on one side only, which the beloved one denies back again, is full of sorrow, and sorrow, the child of sin, rarely loses its original taint. To love and not to be loved is keen pain, and pain breeds bitterness and secret wrath.

"Just in time for luncheon," gayly said Mrs. Fay from one of the ground-floor windows; "did you see Miss Bertram?"

"No," he quickly answered; "surely, she has long come back. I trust she is not walking alone through those lanes," and he looked alarmed and startled at the thought.

"Oh! I dare say she went early," calmly replied Mrs. Fay.

"But have you seen her to-day?" he asked, still uneasy, with his foot on the threshold as if he were ready to start back in search of her.

Mrs. Fay stared.

"Why, don't you know that Miss Cowper came and fetched her last night?" she exclaimed, a little crossly. "It seems there has been a breakdown or an upsetting in the lectures, and they are all back again; and some little bird must have told Miss Cowper you were here, for she came and taxed me with it, as if I were to blame for having my own architect in my own house!" added Mrs. Fay, in an injured tone.

Mr. Graham did not answer. She was gone. He might not see her again. It was very easy to obey her now and offend her no more—very easy, and, alas! very bitter, too.

CHAPTER XLI.

THERE was a pleasant room at Cowper's Hill which Edward Graham had never entered. It was on the ground-floor at the back of the house, and it had been called the morning-room long before Miss Cowper's reign began. Cowper's Hill was an old house. It had belonged for many generations to the old Cowpers, with whom, however, our Miss Cowper could claim no kin, being of very mushroom growth. The old Cowpers, however, had passed away, their house and land had got into the market, and Miss Cowper had bought both. She never said distinctly that she was of the old race, but she allowed it to be believed, and she respected all the little heirlooms, old names and old habits of the old family, as scrupulously as if she had been one of them. The last owner of Cowper's Hill had been a maiden lady, shy and silent, who sat in the morning-room every morning of her life working for the poor; and Miss Cowper made it a point to sit there too, with her hands idly folded in her lap, indeed, but with her tongue engaged upon almshouses, or colleges for the regeneration of woman.

She sat there now talking to Lily on the Monday morning that followed her return. There had been, as Mrs. Fay said, a breakdown in the lectures; but Miss Cowper, following Miss Mortlock's lead, called it a cabal, and held forth unweariedly, while Lily, bending over her frame, listened patiently, and the portrait of the last Miss Cowper looked down at her with a sad, mild face. Gentle maiden lady, who did so silently what good you could, what did you think of your strange successor?

"My dear Lily," said Miss Cowper, taking out her fan and using it vigorously, "you do not know all you have lost by not coming with us. The professor surpassed himself. His subject was the origin of man."

"And what is the origin of man, Miss Cowper?" asked Lily, demurely.

"Man," answered Miss Cowper, not in the least disconcerted by so momentous a question—"man comes from stardust, of course."

The window was open, and a bee came humming in.

"And bees, Miss Cowper," mischievously asked Lily, "where do bees come from?"

"Don't be absurd. Bees!—well, and why should they not come from star-dust too? It is all evolution."

"Has the professor seen evolution?"

"How ridiculous you are! How could he? Don't you know that evolution came from"—here Miss Cowper stopped short, then her face lighting up with triumph—"protoplasm, that's it—and protoplasm, as every person of scientific mind knows—protoplasm accounts for everything."

"Excepting for itself," said Lily.

Miss Cowper fanned herself more vigorously than ever, looked at the ceiling, then at the last Miss Cowper's portrait.

"You have the most unscientific mind," she said, with mild exasperation.

Miss Bertram looked up from her worsted work and answered, gravely:

"I suppose protoplasm is a wonderful thing; but it does not lift the veil of Isis for me, Miss Cowper. The great mystery of all we see is a mystery still."

But, with persons of Miss Cowper's turn of mind, words go very far indeed. Give them protoplasm or evolution, and they are content.

"Is it possible you do not understand?" cried Miss Cowper, warming with her subject. "You have only to conceive self-existing matter in a state of endless evolution."

"But I find that so much harder to understand than God and creation," answered obstinate Lily.

"You narrow-minded little creature!" said Miss Cowper, amused at her absurdity. "Just take a microscope, and it will tell you all about it."

"Are small things truer than large ones?" retorted Miss Bertram; "what I look at daily is incomprehensible; is that which the microscope shows me less mysterious? How do I, how does any one, know what lies beyond the microscope—?"

"Nothing," triumphantly interrupted Miss Cowper—"there is nothing beyond what the microscope shows us."

"And a more perfect instrument will never show us more?" asked Lily, opening her eyes wide.

"Never," said Miss Cowper, in the same tone of triumphant certainty. We need scarcely say that Professor Mort-

lock was not answerable for such astounding statements. Indeed, Miss Cowper's version of his favorite dogma often provoked him beyond the limits of patience; and he had been known to declare in a penitent moment, and perhaps with regard to Miss Cowper, that to talk of such matters to a fool was to be one's self a fool of the first water.

To be virtuous in life, to be pure in heart, to be meek and forgiving, to love God and one's neighbor, to have hope and charity, are things accessible to all men and women. One need not know much about protoplasm or evolution to pass through life blameless and loving; but the creed, if creed it can be called which rests on science, turns into absurdity when uttered by the unscientific. And its high-priests know this well. Hence, perhaps, their thorough and natural contempt for ignorant humanity. They are like the gods of the lotus-eaters. They know how, only by the labor of years, by the study of a lifetime, a few, a very few, can reach the empyrean heights on which they take their desolate rest; and, looking down at the herd below, at the herd that labors and tills, that lives by the sweat of its brow and the toil of its hands, that has not and never can have time for research or leisure for intellectual life, they laugh at its fond illusions, at its foolish dreams of Christian perfection and of a life to come.

"And so bees come from star-dust," said Lily, musingly; "poor little things!"

"My dear child," remonstrated Miss Cowper, "you do not suppose that bees were always the busy little creatures they are now, and that there were always bee-hives? I have already told you that bees are, like all things, the result of evolution. Bees began by being larvæ, of course. They made neither wax nor honey, in those early days; but groped on through existence till they progressed into the bee state. Then they began to feel the want of making honey, and—"

"Were there any flowers then?" asked Lily.

If Miss Cowper had answered truly she would have said, "I do not know;" but, unwilling to compromise the dignity of science by so candid an admission, she steered clear of the difficulty by saying, "Perhaps there were, and perhaps there were not. At all events, when there were flowers bees went to them and made honey, and that was natural selection. Ages passed, however, before the larvæ found out that they

ought to be bees, and before the bees found out that they ought to make honey; and during those ages the larvæ transmitted the result of their experience to other larvæ, and bees to other bees, until they all improved and progressed, and the bee which we now see was the result—and so it was with man," said Miss Cowper, in a tone which admitted of no reply.

Here the servant came in, and handed a card to Miss Cowper, who, handing it again to Lily, said:

"My sight is so bad this morning, just see who it is, dear."

Miss Bertram raised her bending head from the frame at which she was sitting, and said, with a heightened color:

"It is Mr. Graham's card."

"Ah! he comes about the college, of course; and Miss Mortlock is out. How provoking! I suppose I must go. I wish Mr. Graham would not make it a point of coming when Miss Mortlock is out of the way."

"Shall I go and hear what he has to say?" asked Miss Bertram, hesitatingly.

But Miss Cowper thanked her coldly, said that Mr. Graham would not stay long, of course, and that she would go. She went, and Lily remained alone in the silent room, bending over her frame with a face as flushed as the roses that grew under her nimble fingers.

"So pleased to see you, Mr. Graham," said Miss Cowper, in tones of ice, as she entered the drawing-room, and read the disappointment he felt on Edward Graham's face. "I thought you had left Saint Olave's. So glad you are there still. Something new about the college, I suppose?"

And, laying the tip of her fan on her lips, Miss Cowper looked hard at her visitor, as much as to say, "The college, if you please, and not Miss Bertram."

But Mr. Graham, who had come prepared for something of the sort, was not taken by surprise, and before five minutes were over Miss Cowper lay prostrate under a heap of technicalities as mighty and as crushing as the fatal bracelets and bucklers with which the victorious Sabines rewarded the treason of Tarpeia.

"Dear me, how interesting!" said she, trying in vain to look wise; "but suppose you would kindly look in this evening, Mr. Graham, and talk with Miss Mortlock. We shall

have a few friends from Saint Olave's, where, I am happy to say, science is beginning to find some votaries. The professor, of course, will join us, and he is such a wonderful man that he will give you many valuable hints, I am sure," kindly added Miss Cowper.

Mr. Graham swallowed this pill and promised to look in toward nine or ten that evening. "At least, I shall see her," thought he, going away. "That way he can only see her," thought Miss Cowper, going back to Miss Bertram, to whom she carelessly remarked:

"A business call, as I thought;" then, rather querulously, "I hope the college will not be the death of me. Mr. Graham has so addled my poor head?"

Lily said nothing; but went on with her roses.

"I wonder why I ever thought of him when my own nephew is an architect," resumed Miss Cowper.

"Mr. Graham wonders at it, too."

"Then why should I not have my own nephew?" Miss Cowper asked, tartly. "I did get cross with Richard about that money three years ago; but the best way to make him pay it back would be to employ him, I fancy."

"Yes," dreamily said Lily, "it would."

There is nothing so provoking as when people whom you expect to differ from you agree to all you say. Miss Cowper, who had not the least intention of giving up Mr. Graham for her nephew, of whom, to say the truth, she thought very poorly, went off at once at a tangent.

"I hope you will be more civil to the professor this evening than you were yesterday."

"I shall do my best," said Lily, with a smile so serene that Miss Cowper could not carry on the war.

Miss Cowper's drawing-room was already full when Mr. Graham entered it that evening. Saint Olave's is a very dull little town, and the mere prospect of hearing a live professor expound "some of those odious theories, you know," had drawn almost as many people as if some spirit-rapping were expected. The people of Saint Olave's were good Christians, and had been to church and chapel the day before; but excitement was rare among them, and such a temptation as that of listening to a second edition of the lectures which had been tabooed down at that narrow-minded Poppleton was not to be resisted.

"Another professor," whispered one lady to another, as the tall figure and grave, dark face of Mr. Graham appeared; "*he* will be sure to say dreadful things—mark my words, he will. I wonder what his name is. Graham did you say?—I have heard of Professor Graham."

Meanwhile Miss Cowper and Miss Mortlock were receiving Mr. Graham graciously, and Miss Cowper took care to keep him under her wing as far away from Miss Bertram as was possible. And yet how soon his eyes had found her on the couch, where she sat between two gentlemen of mature age. How they lingered upon her, and left her reluctantly, soon to return again! How long would this restraint last? When would jealous and watchful eyes cease to observe him? Insufferably long was that evening, and yet Mr. Graham was favored with Professor Mortlock's views on architecture, for the man was a cyclopædia of knowledge, and could talk of and dogmatize upon everything. Luckily the learned and eloquent professor wearied of the theme just when Mr. Graham felt driven to despair. He changed his place, he moved across the room, Miss Cowper made a new guest welcome at the same time, and in a moment Mr. Graham was by Miss Bertram's side.

"Excuse me," she said, quietly, before he could say a word, "Mrs. Mountford has been seized with sudden faintness. Miss Mortlock is with her; but I may be wanted—I must go."

They stood near the door of the morning-room. She opened it and went in, and left him there biting his lip and looking at that door which she had closed again.

"Most interesting," said a lady's voice near him; "Professor Mortlock is a most remarkable man."

The professor, who knew what was expected of him, was holding forth. The people who had come to hear him were silent; and it was in a hushed room, standing with his back to the fireplace, that the learned professor began a second edition of that lecture which Poppleton had tabooed.

"The origin of man," said Professor Mortlock, "I refer to star-dust, of course."

Miss Cowper, mindful of this morning's conversation with Miss Bertram, and oblivious of the fact that the professor hated interruption, here thought fit to say:

"So I was telling Miss Bertram this morning, and bees, too, came from protoplasm, I told her."

"If you like to call it protoplasm," said the professor, smiling and trying not to look annoyed, "do so, my dear madam. The main fact remains unaltered. Protoplasm is—"

"The same thing as bioplasm," remarked Miss Cowper, nodding. "One is living matter and the other dead matter."

The professor looked patient, which, as every one knows, is the polite protest against impertinence, and said with great calmness:

"My dear madam, allow me. An exasperated theologian (pity such holy men should have such irritable tempers) has attempted to draw the futile distinction."

"Futile, indeed!" laughed Miss Cowper—"as if there were any difference between a dead and a living bee!"

It was one of Miss Cowper's trying ways to echo the professor's sayings, and attempt to make them her own by repeating them, with a few trifling modifications, of course; and, in consideration of the services she was expected to render to the cause, the professor endured her vagaries with much patience; but even patience has its limits, and Miss Mortlock generally acted as moderator. When Miss Cowper went too far, she either stopped her short, or, acting like the drag of a coach going down-hill, she made her at least relax her speed. Unluckily, Miss Mortlock was still with Mrs. Mountford in the morning-room, and the fated dialogue went on, the professor raising his voice to silence Miss Cowper, and Miss Cowper raising hers in the firm determination of using it freely in her own house.

"When the potential man was, as it were, feeling his way," said the professor, looking big, and studiously averting his glasses from Miss Cowper's side.

"Like the potential bee," persisted Miss Cowper, resolved not to be beaten.

"And when he had got as far as the ape, and the ape became the man."

"Just as the larva became the bee."

"And he fought his way up through his lowest appetites to his highest development."

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"And the bee—what a nuisance he must have been!—went buzzing about."

"Confound the bee!" cried the exasperated professor, turning on Miss Cowper with an inflamed face, forgetting his manners and his philosophy, and proving, alas! that a man of science can be as irritable as a theologian.

A dead silence fell on the room. Bees, protoplasm, the origin of man, star-dust, were forgotten in this awful convulsion of Miss Cowper's social world. People stared at each other in dismay, trying not to look conscious that the Cowper and the Mortlock association was at an end. Alas! vain was the attempt to ignore the fact that the laws of evolution were now being fulfilled in a remarkable manner—that presumption, ignorance, and inordinate vanity had led to this inevitable catastrophe.

"Professor Mortlock," began Miss Cowper, in a voice full of wrath.

"Madam, I have the honor to wish you a good-evening," said the professor, with much stateliness; and, when Miss Mortlock came in from the next room, her brother was gone, and it was all over—indeed, no one staid after this. The guests escaped one by one, and Miss Mortlock remained alone.

"My dear Miss Cowper," said the latter lady, "what is it?—what has happened?—where is the professor?"

"Never was I so insulted before!" cried Miss Cowper, whose wrath had not yet subsided, "and I beg to tell you, Miss Mortlock, that I will not stand it. Professor Mortlock has been taking advantage of my easy disposition too long. I don't want to hear any more about the college. Why should I give all my money to a college?" cried Miss Cowper, in a rage. "I will not, Miss Mortlock—I will not! I will keep my money—no one shall get it out of me!"

Her fury was so great that Miss Mortlock could only look at her in dismay.

"But, my dear Miss Cowper," she at length observed, in her most soothing tones, "what can Professor Mortlock have done?"

Miss Cowper laughed derisively.

"He said, 'Confound the bee!'" she cried. "I never was so insulted before. You may tell him so, for I shall never look in his face again. 'Confound the bee!' And you may tell him that I am sick of evolution, protoplasm, and bioplasm, and I believe they are all his own inventions,"

said Miss Cowper, staring hard at Miss Mortlock, who saw and understood with much consternation that the college was, indeed, as she afterward expressed it, "done for."

All this Miss Bertram had escaped. When Mrs. Mountford revived, and, with many excuses for the trouble she had given, took her leave, Miss Mortlock returned to the drawing-room; but Miss Bertram, on the plea that her head ached, remained where she was, and leaned out of the window that had been opened for the fainting lady. She had not been there long, when "Miss Bertram," uttered in a low but emphatic voice behind her, made her turn round. She saw Mr. Graham, and looked at him with a startled face, on which some displeasure gradually settled.

"Pray, excuse me," he said, "but I may not for a long time have the opportunity of addressing you again. I could not resist the temptation, when I saw you were here alone, of coming to say what may be good-by till the seventeenth of September," he added.

She looked strangely distressed.

"Why will you not forget me?" she asked, a little vehemently.

"Never!" he said, setting his teeth, and looking at her almost angrily. "I will never forget you!"

"Well, then," she answered, with some pride, "remember, at least, the promise you made me, and are always breaking: either avoid me, or—or speak no more."

He was hurt to the quick.

"Very well," said he. "I shall shun your presence, since it is your wish that I should do so. Good-evening, Miss Bertram."

He was turning to the door.

"O Mr. Graham!" she exclaimed, in a low voice, "are you angry with me, after all?"

He was very angry, but the moment she spoke he came back to her. He was angry still, but he loved her.

"I always liked you," she said, gently. "I like you still. You have suffered much, oh! so much, for my sake. I never can forget it; but I am pledged to remain free till I am twenty-one. You must not even wish to tempt me, Mr. Graham."

There was a dangerous tenderness in her eyes, a dangerous tenderness in her voice. His veins throbbed, he felt

giddy with hope, joy, and fear, like one who hears the song of the siren, and is drawn into the fatal vortex.

"Do you mean it all?" he asked.

"I mean nothing," she cried, with an alarmed look, "save that I do not wish to offend you, Mr. Graham."

He bit his lip as he looked at her. He had not dreamed it. She had meant something—meant more than not wishing to offend him—but he could not tax her with it.

"God forgive you if you are trifling with me," he could not help saying, and his pale lips quivered as he spoke. "Do not do it—do not! You would be my perdition! You might make me hate you, but I never could forget you—never! I should be haunted forever with your face and your voice. Be true, Lily, be true!"

She looked at him as if she were wakening from a long, deep dream.

"What have I said or done," she asked," that you should ask me to be true, Mr. Graham? Indeed, you must attempt to see me no more."

"Till you are twenty-one," said he.

She shook her head.

"Even that I will not say," she answered. "You will take it as a pledge, and I will give none."

He chafed under the hard sentence; then, taking her hand, he looked in her face, and said, with a sigh:

"I must submit. I cannot help myself. I will do as you wish. I will attempt to see you no more. But on the seventeenth of September, as sure as my name is Edward Graham, I will ask you to be my wife; and then, Miss Bertram, you will not, I hope, refuse me that yea or nay which you deny me this evening."

She withdrew her hand from his, she turned her pale face away from his gaze. Was it a good or a bad sign that she looked so troubled and so sad, as if some doom she could not avoid were falling upon her.

"Good-night, Miss Bertram," he said, gently. "May I write to you?"

"Good-night, Mr. Graham," she answered. "Pray, do not write." And thus they parted.

CHAPTER XLII.

A BIRD of the air had conveyed to Mrs. Fay the tidings of the great Mortlock and Cowper difference long before Mr. Graham met her at luncheon the next day. To his surprise she knew every word that had passed, and dwelt with great gusto on Professor Mortlock's "Confound the bee!"

"And so the college is all up," she added, with evident complacency.

"I should not wonder if it were," replied Mr. Graham, very calmly.

Mrs. Fay looked hard at him. He took it very easily. Was he so sure of her two wings? When Mrs. Fay wanted a thing, she wanted it vehemently, passionately, without a second's delay. *Désir de fille est un feu qui dévore. Désir de femme est cent fois pis encore.* The wicked French proverb was abundantly fulfilled with Mrs. Fay; but, also, when she wanted to get rid of a thing, she wanted to get rid of it thoroughly, and without having to wait even a day or an hour for deliverance. The thing in her way now happened to be Mr. Graham and the two wings. Miss Cowper was giving up the college, why should she not give up the wings too? She was sick of them; she could not imagine why or how she had ever thought of them. It was that sly little flirt, Miss Bertram, who had put it into her head, and all to bring Mr. Graham to Saint Olave's. And what did she, Mrs. Fay, want with Mr. Graham now? Miss Cowper had given up the college, and going on with the wings after that was like playing out a game when the stakes are gone.

"And what shall *we* do now, Mr. Graham?" she asked, musingly.

"Go on with our two wings, Mrs. Fay," he placidly answered.

"Oh! that will be delightful," said Mrs. Fay, looking enchanted. "There never was such impudence," she thought, as, luncheon being over, they went out together in the flower-garden, and there walked side by side, appearing the best friends in the world. "Wings, indeed! I will have no wings. I want a conservatory and a sort of winter-garden, and I can have that for next winter, too; and it will cost

next to nothing in comparison with those odious wings that I am so sick of. Only how can I get rid of him, if he will not go?"

But when was a woman of Mrs. Fay's age and experience at a loss for a decent pretense to turn out an inconvenient guest?

"And how is dear Mrs. Graham getting on?" she suddenly asked. "I saw you got a letter from her this morning."

But, no, Mrs. Fay was mistaken. Mr. Graham had not heard from his aunt for some time.

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Fay, raising her eyebrows. "Dear me, Mr. Graham, I do not know what to say, how to act. I did see Mrs. Graham when I went to town some time back, and I feel it my duty to tell you, though she forbade me, that she had met with a serious accident—a sprain, a fracture. I am not sure which. I know she was sitting with her feet on a stool. She looked pale, dear old soul, but so nice with her beautiful white hair."

Edward Graham heard her and changed color. His love for his aunt was deep and strong, and, like all love, easily alarmed. He questioned Mrs. Fay eagerly, almost angrily. He felt wroth at the concealment which she had abetted. But Mrs. Fay would not know exactly what had befallen Mrs. Graham—she only knew that she could not stir from her chair, that she looked pale, and that at her time of life such things did matter, you know.

Mr. Graham heard her, said not a word, but looked at his watch.

"You faithless man, are you going to leave?" cried Mrs. Fay, in well-acted dismay.

"I must," was Mr. Graham's short answer.

"But you will come back?" This was said very dolorously.

Yes, Mr. Graham would come back; but he must run down and see his aunt.

"I know you will not come back," plaintively said Mrs. Fay. "Miss Cowper and Miss Bertram left for May Lodge this morning and May Lodge is at Hammersmith, close to Mrs. Graham's; and you will be going there talking about the college, and you will leave me and my wings in the lurch."

Mrs. Fay had kept this Parthian shaft for the end, and she now watched its effect on Mr. Graham. He changed color. Miss Bertram was at that very moment living close to the spot to which he was going. He would not call on Miss Cowper; he would not attempt to see Miss Bertram; but, assuredly, she would call upon his aunt; he might meet her there, and, even if he did not, he would feel her presence in the place; and his eyes softened as there came across him a vision of Mrs. Graham's pleasant countenance, and of a beaming face near hers in that old parlor which he knew so well, and had loved from his boyhood.

"Mind you come back!" said Mrs. Fay, as Mr. Graham took leave of her an hour later, and, looking very doleful, she saw him depart with infinite satisfaction.

"The only thing now is to keep him out of the house," thought the dear creature.

When Mr. Graham reached town, and drove off at once to Hammersmith, he found his aunt walking about with a stick; but bright and pleasant as ever.

"What nonsense have they been frightening you with, my poor boy?" said she; "why, I am almost well now! What a shame to bring you down from Saint Olave's. You must go back again."

"No hurry, aunt," answered he, "I have ever so much work to do here; besides, I cannot trust you, you know. No news?" he added, looking round him, as though he expected the silent walls to tell him something. But, no, Mrs. Graham had no news. She was tempted to ask him about Lily, and to know if he really was smitten with her; but for once she resisted the impulse which so often led her to put imprudent questions or make as imprudent remarks. The poor boy was very busy now, and he was coming again this evening—it would do then. So, Mr. Graham, who was in a great hurry, sure enough, having neglected everything for some time back, left her at once, and, driving past May Lodge, looked up at its open windows. The white net curtains were fluttering gently in the warm breeze of noon. A servant was settling flowers on the balcony of the first floor; but she whom his eyes sought was invisible. Alas! if he had only looked on the shady side of the way, he would have seen her walking slowly toward his aunt's house. Five minutes more in his aunt's parlor and he would have seen her face to face.

Mrs. Graham sat knitting in her parlor window, between a bird-cage and a bright geranium, when the door opened, and a blooming face peeped in, and a pleasant voice said:

"May I come in, Mrs. Graham?"

"My goodness!" said Mrs. Graham, and she dropped her knitting.

"Well, and did you not know I would come?" asked Lily, smiling as she came forward. "You wrote to me and said, 'Let me look at your face,' and here I am, and you may look at my face as long as you like."

"And you are Lily!" said Mrs. Graham, admiringly. "My dear, what a beauty you have grown?"

"Have I?" said Miss Bertram, and she blushed. She had not yet grown accustomed to the acknowledgment of her personal attractions.

"But how did you get in?" cried Mrs. Graham, suddenly remembering that Miss Bertram had entered unannounced.

"I found the door open and I came in. I remember the old parlor very well, Mrs. Graham; I sat on that chair, and —and I remember it all."

"I must give Jane warning," said Mrs. Graham, with a sigh; "this is the second time this week."

"Try her a third time," coaxingly said Lily.

"But suppose you had been a housebreaker—besides, I like to keep a sort of rule over her," added Mrs. Graham, who was, in fact, a real disciplinarian. "Jane would like to have the upper hand of me, I know, and—but, dear me, I dare say it was that foolish boy who left it open—just like him, rushing off. By the way, my dear, is it true"—clasping her hands—"is it really true that my boy Ned is—they called it dangling, but I know better—is it really true that Ned Graham is making love to you?"

Miss Bertram turned almost pale on hearing so startling a question, and, indeed, did not attempt to answer it. Mrs. Graham hastened to observe:

"He has just been here; but don't fancy that he said a word of it to me. It was Mrs. Fay who told me."

"Mr. Graham has just been here," said Lily, looking around her; "I thought he was at Saint Olave's."

"He left it this morning; and now, my dear, do tell me all about it."

But Miss Bertram had no tale to tell. Yes, Mr. Graham

liked her, she believed, but she could not think of anything of the kind till she was of age—and that was all.

"But that is nothing," said Mrs. Graham, looking chagrined. "You used to like him so much formerly, and perhaps you don't know what your father's wishes were."

"Mr. Graham has told me."

"But you don't care about him now, I see—I see."

Miss Bertram looked strangely perplexed.

"I always did like Mr. Graham," she said; "and I know how much he suffered about that turret; and, Mrs. Graham, on the very day when I am twenty-one I will atone—I will atone."

And her dark eyes flashed with a dewy light as she uttered the words.

"Yes, that turret cost him Lily Scot," simply said Mrs. Graham; "and I suspect that you have cost him Lily Scot again. I wanted him to meet her; but he was at Saint Olave's, and he wrote me the strangest letter; one would have thought there never had been such a person as Lily Scot."

"I am sorry," began Lily, whose face was in a flame; "Miss Scot—"

"My dear," interrupted the old lady, "Lily Scot never knew, and never will know, anything about it. But, since he must not have her, I do wish he had you. So be a good girl and have him."

Lily hung her head and answered, in a low voice, that Mrs. Graham was very kind, but that she must not like any one till she was twenty-one. She had promised Miss Cowper.

"Dear me! why lose so much time?" naively said Mrs. Graham.

Lily could not help laughing.

"It is not time lost," she said, gayly.

"Well, I suppose it is like putting out one's gold at high interest," said Mrs. Graham; "the longer you leave it out, the more it brings in."

"Oh! I did not mean that, Mrs. Graham, oh! not that."

"Well, if you like him now there is no time lost," persisted Mr. Graham's aunt.

That arrow seemed to have gone home, for Miss Bertram was mute, but, rallying, she said:

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"He left it this morning; and now, my dear, do tell me all about it."

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"Well, if you like him now there is no time lost," persisted Mr. Graham's aunt.

That arrow seemed to have gone home, for Miss Bertram was mute, but, rallying, she said:

"No, Mrs. Graham, that is not it; but I have promised Miss Cowper not to like any one till I am of age—and I never break my word," said Lily, with tears of earnestness in her eyes.

"You are a very odd child," remarked Mrs. Graham, looking puzzled; "you might promise not to marry, but that is quite another thing than not loving."

"Ah! it will not end well—it will not end well," said Miss Bertram, with a sort of wail in her voice, "and Mr. Graham will end by hating me. I know it—I know it."

"My goodness! why should he hate such a dear little thing as you are?" caressingly asked Mrs. Graham.

Lily tried to laugh, but she could not; tears stood in her eyes and her lips quivered.

"Had she and Edward Graham fallen out?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"Oh, no!" answered Lily; but Mr. Graham would hate her before it was all over.

"Tell me all about it, dear, and I will make it right."

Lily shook her head and tried to speak of other things, but Mrs. Graham was obstinate.

"Tell me, dear," she persisted.

"Well, then, Mrs. Graham, three years ago, just before he died, dear papa told me he should like me to marry Mr. Cowper, and I said yes, but there was no time. When Mr. Cowper, however, asked me I said yes again; it was Miss Cowper who would not, and who made me promise never to get engaged while I was with her. Mr. Cowper was very vexed with his aunt, and also about some money, and he said I should be sure to like some one else before I was twenty-one, and I said I never would."

Mrs. Graham looked grave.

"I see, you gave Mr. Cowper your word to wait for him."

"No, no," cried Lily, her face turning rosy red; "but I said that, as true as my name was Lily, I would like no one till I was of age, and I never will—I never will," she said, her voice sinking low, and the flush dying from her face and leaving it white and pale.

"And you have not told this to Ned?"

"Why should I? I have not seen Mr. Cowper from that day to this. I made no promise to him; but, perhaps—perhaps when I am twenty-one he will remember, and come and

remind me of what my father wished, of what I wished for his sake; and, whatever my answer may be, no man has a right to know that Mr. Cowper may be accepted or refused by me. Besides, Mr. Graham hates Mr. Cowper so much, and Mr. Cowper does not hate him. I told him how I would pay Mr. Graham all his money back some day, and he called me a dear romantic little thing, but he said nothing against it."

Mrs. Graham rubbed her nose and looked very thoughtful.

"Tell me the truth," she said, at length, taking Lily's hand and looking in her face, "is Ned fond of you—very fond of you—desperately fond of you?"

"Yes," answered Lily, speaking low.

"Then marry him, dear, and do not think of that good-for-nothing Dick Cowper, who called you romantic for wanting to pay back my poor boy his own money, though he is not poor now, thank Heaven; and, my dear, you must pay him back so—with your hand in his—will you?"

Lily smiled at the bird in his cage, at the blooming flower in its vase, at the blue sky beyond the window.

"Perhaps I will, and perhaps I will not," she said, at length; "but, whatever I do, I will not like Mr. Graham till I am twenty-one," she saucily added.

Mrs. Graham shook her head; but Lily only laughed. That shyness—that reticence which kept Mr. Graham at such a distance did not exist for his aunt.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she coaxingly added, "you will do me a favor. We are here at May Lodge, close by—you will not tell Mr. Graham!"

"Then you are not going back to Cowper's Hill?"

No, they were not going back; and perhaps Mr. Graham thought they were there still, and would Mrs. Graham say nothing about it?

"Unless he asks me," frankly said Mrs. Graham; "I never can keep a secret."

This being agreed to, they dropped Mr. Graham and love and marriage, and all the topics which perplex youth, and drifted into other discourse which lasted till the day was well worn, and Lily, starting up like Cinderella, went away, and like Cinderella, too, left a token behind her.

Mr. Graham came in the evening; but for a few mo-

ments only. Mrs. Graham, keeping her lips tight, was virtuously silent on the subject of Lily's visit. He longed to question, but had no need to do so—a white handkerchief lay on the carpet near Mrs. Graham's chair; he picked it up, handed it to his aunt, who checked an exclamation. Mr. Graham, however, had seen the embroidered L. B. in the corner, and bit his lip.

"She must have asked my aunt not to tell me," he thought; "let her—let her."

"Auntie," said he, rising, and walking restlessly about the parlor, "will you behave very well if I leave you for a while?"

"My dear boy, where *are* you going?"

"To Sicily. Mr. Blake wants to build a villa there; I refused to go at first; but—I think I shall go now."

"And Mrs. Fay's two wings?"

"Oh! Mrs. Fay is in despair. Her cousin, Mr. Fay, has telegraphed for her; he is dying, it seems, and Mrs. Fay's wings must lie by. I am quite free. Yes, I have lost a good deal of time already; I shall go to Sicily."

"And when will you come back, Ned?"

"I shall be back by the seventeenth of September," said Mr. Graham, slowly; and, angry though he was with Miss Bertram, there flashed across him a vision of that seventeenth, and of Lily Bertram standing before him, fair, blushing, and twenty-one. "Let her dare not to give me my answer then!" thought he, with flashing eyes—"let her dare not to do it!"

"And is it really a good thing for you to go to Sicily?" asked Mrs. Graham.

"Don't you know, auntie, that Mr. Blake is a fortune in himself? Mrs. Fay warned me not to trust her, and I foolishly did not take her at her word. So I have lost both time and money with the good lady, and must now go back to work in downright earnest."

He was still walking up and down the little parlor, and there was nothing of a lovesick man in Mr. Graham's grave Italian face, so earnest, so severe in its earnestness.

"Does he care so much about her?" thought Mrs. Graham, wondering. Ay, he did care about her—much—very much; but he was a rebel at heart, and with a rebel's pride and defiance he said to himself, as he walked home, those

lines of Byron's, which had haunted him ever since he had parted from Miss Bertram:

> "Unworthy manhood! unto thee
> Indifferent should the smile or frown
> Of beauty be."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE August sun was scorching the streets; but Mrs. Graham's parlor, with the window open and the Venetian blinds down, felt cool and pleasant. Mrs. Graham sat by the window, looking at Miss Bertram, who sat opposite her reading a letter which her friend had just put in her hand. It was from Mr. Graham, and it had traveled all the way from Sicily to Hammersmith. It was a kind letter, a pleasant one also; but it said nothing of Mr. Graham's return.

"And this is August," said Mr. Graham's aunt, "and Ned had said that he would be sure to be back by—I forget what day—in September, and, though he does not say so, I think he will. He must have important business, then, by the way he spoke."

The rich color rose steadily to Miss Bertram's face, but her eyes remained bent on the letter lying open on her lap.

"Mr. Blake is very rich?" she said, interrogatively.

"Ever so rich. It is a good thing for Ned, is that villa. And he likes Sicily; it is a splendid country, he says. I would have shown you all his letters if you had not been gadding in Scotland with Miss Cowper. They are beautiful letters. I have put them all away in my Indian cabinet, and my feet will not yet let me go up and down stairs without trouble. I have scarcely been out of the house all this time; but now that you are here again, dear, shall we not have a few drives together?"

Miss Bertram looked at her wistfully.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," she said, "we arrived this morning, and we leave to-morrow."

"To-morrow! And where are you going? Not back again to Scotland?"

"Oh, no! we are going to Cowper's Hill, and thence to France. Mr. Lennard is dead," added Lily, in a low tone; "I am not quite of age yet, but no one will torment me. We are going to Saint Aubin."

"And when will you come back?" asked Mrs. Graham, looking chagrined.

"I do not know, and I must go now," she said, rising as she spoke; "and, dear Mrs. Graham, when you write to Mr. Graham please do not mention this."

"My dear, he never says a word about you," innocently said Mrs. Graham; "he never knew about your being at May Lodge at all, you see."

Miss Bertram colored, and was silent awhile.

"I dare say Mr. Graham has forgotten me," she said, carelessly; "I have deserved it, and—it is best so," she added, a little sadly—"yes, it is best so."

"My dear Ned never forgets," gravely said Mrs. Graham, giving the hand she held an emphatic pressure.

"He forgot Lily Scot," was the quick reply, and, before Mrs. Graham was ready with an answer, Miss Bertram said, hurriedly, as she drew her hand away: "How late it is, and Miss Cowper is waiting for me! Good-by, dear Mrs. Graham; do not forget little Lily."

A fond kiss, a quick embrace, a half-sad, half-mirthful look of the soft brown eyes, and Miss Bertram was gone.

"Well, it is true," soliloquized Mrs. Graham, "he did forget Lily Scot; and—who knows?—perhaps he has forgotten this one too."

And she sat up in her chair, and did not unfold the *Illustrated London News*, which a friend had just sent in, and she puckered her kind forehead into numberless wrinkles. She speculated about this love which is so much to the young and so little to the old. Mrs. Graham had been a good wife and a happy one, but she had never been in love with her husband, and Mr. Graham had not been in love with her. They had not known that bliss or that torment, but had walked through life hand-in-hand, loving and beloved.

"I wish he were married to Lily," thought Mrs. Graham, uneasily; "and then there would be none of that nonsense of a hide-and-seek, and don't tell this and that, which only makes mischief. Why did she not tell him, and why said he never a word to me? Silly, silly things!"

"O ma'am!" said Jane, looking in, "such a surprise for you!"

"Ned, is that you?" cried Mrs. Graham, starting up.

"Yes, auntie," answered a voice from the hall.

"Jane, the door was open again—don't deny it."

"Of course, the door was open," said Mr. Graham, walking in. "How else could I have entered?"

"My dear boy," cried Mrs. Graham, forgetting Jane, the door, and discipline, in the joy of seeing him again, "how well you look, and how brown, and—oh! what a pity you were not here five minutes earlier, you would have seen her, and I am sure it would have been all right."

"Seen whom, aunt?" But he knew—how well he knew!—whom she meant.

"Lily, to be sure. I was not to speak of her to you, but it's out, and now, Ned, do tell me, have you forgotten her?"

"Forgotten Miss Bertram! No, and why should I?"

"Ah! but she says you forgot Lily Scot."

His eyes lit with a triumphant joy which he subdued quickly. Was she, could she be jealous?

"My dear auntie," said he, sitting down, "you do not ask what brings me back so suddenly?"

"No misfortune, I hope, Ned?"

"Indeed, yes, a great misfortune, auntie. Mr. Blake is dead. He went with his cousin, Mr. Henry Blake, on an excursion to the mountains, and there met with a fatal accident. He was killed on the spot."

The tears rushed to Mrs. Graham's blue eyes.

"O Ned!" she cried, "I am so sorry! You have lost a kind friend."

"One of the best I ever had, auntie. Mr. Blake was, in one sense, the making of me."

Mr. Graham spoke with a sad gravity which showed how much he felt the loss of his patron.

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Graham, again. "Poor Mr. Blake! was his villa finished?"

"The villa will have the fate of the turret. It will never be finished," answered Mr. Graham, quietly. "Mr. Henry Blake's first act was to tell me as much. It will go to decay with its Moorish hall and courts, while its palm-trees and orange-groves grow taller and thicker around it, until they

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A fond kiss, a quick embrace, a half-sad, half-mirthful look of the soft brown eyes, and Miss Bertram was gone.

"Well, it is true," soliloquized Mrs. Graham, "he did forget Lily Scot; and—who knows?—perhaps he has forgotten this one too."

And she sat up in her chair, and did not unfold the *Illustrated London News*, which a friend had just sent in, and she puckered her kind forehead into numberless wrinkles. She speculated about this love which is so much to the young and so little to the old. Mrs. Graham had been a good wife and a happy one, but she had never been in love with her husband, and Mr. Graham had not been in love with her. They had not known that bliss or that torment, but had walked through life hand-in-hand, loving and beloved.

"I wish he were married to Lily," thought Mrs. Graham, uneasily; "and then there would be none of that nonsense of a hide-and-seek, and don't tell this and that, which only makes mischief. Why did she not tell him, and why said he never a word to me? Silly, silly things!"

"O ma'am!" said Jane, looking in, "such a surprise for you!"

"Ned, is that you?" cried Mrs. Graham, starting up.

"Yes, auntie," answered a voice from the hall.

"Jane, the door was open again—don't deny it."

"Of course, the door was open," said Mr. Graham, walking in. "How else could I have entered?"

"My dear boy," cried Mrs. Graham, forgetting Jane, the door, and discipline, in the joy of seeing him again, "how well you look, and how brown, and—oh! what a pity you were not here five minutes earlier, you would have seen her, and I am sure it would have been all right."

"Seen whom, aunt?" But he knew—how well he knew!—whom she meant.

"Lily, to be sure. I was not to speak of her to you, but it's out, and now, Ned, do tell me, have you forgotten her?"

"Forgotten Miss Bertram! No, and why should I?"

"Ah! but she says you forgot Lily Scot."

His eyes lit with a triumphant joy which he subdued quickly. Was she, could she be jealous?

"My dear auntie," said he, sitting down, "you do not ask what brings me back so suddenly?"

"No misfortune, I hope, Ned?"

"Indeed, yes, a great misfortune, auntie. Mr. Blake is dead. He went with his cousin, Mr. Henry Blake, on an excursion to the mountains, and there met with a fatal accident. He was killed on the spot."

The tears rushed to Mrs. Graham's blue eyes.

"O Ned!" she cried, "I am so sorry! You have lost a kind friend."

"One of the best I ever had, auntie. Mr. Blake was, in one sense, the making of me."

Mr. Graham spoke with a sad gravity which showed how much he felt the loss of his patron.

"I am so sorry," said Mrs. Graham, again. "Poor Mr. Blake! was his villa finished?"

"The villa will have the fate of the turret. It will never be finished," answered Mr. Graham, quietly. "Mr. Henry Blake's first act was to tell me as much. It will go to decay with its Moorish hall and courts, while its palm-trees and orange-groves grow taller and thicker around it, until they

close it as the forest inclosed the palace of the sleeping beauty."

"Ned, what a disappointment!"

"Yes, I had meant to make a little Alhambra of it—such was Mr. Blake's wish; and in that half-Eastern land it could have been."

"But—but you will be paid all the same?" suggested Mrs. Graham.

"I suppose so—in time, auntie. Mr. Henry Blake and Mr. Mordaunt Blake and Mr. Simpson Blake are going to law for the property—and I may have to wait. Auntie, don't look for your check-book; I have a very fair sum at my banker's; but I have lost a good deal of time this year, which is a pity—and now tell me all about yourself and Jane and your poor people—everything, auntie."

He leaned back in his chair, looking kindly at the dear old face before him, and Mrs. Graham became cheerful and communicative, and time slipped by till she had to leave him alone to hold a conference with cook.

Mr. Graham remained alone, if a man can be said to be alone when an all-absorbing thought is with him. It had been with him ever since they had parted. She had asked him not to write; he had more than obeyed her. He had not even asked his aunt to give him tidings of the woman he loved; but the feeling thus checked from its natural outlet had become all the deeper in seclusion. The site of Mr. Blake's villa was a wild spot on the mountain side, overlooking the sea. No town of any importance was near. Books and newspapers only visited Mr. Blake and his architect at rare intervals. Everything save his present task and her image seemed to have dropped out of Mr. Graham's life. He had dwelt upon that one thought of her till it became almost more than he could bear. Did she care for him? had she forgotten him? what would her answer be on the seventeenth of September? Again and again he asked himself these questions while he saw her with the mind's eye in that Moorish home which he was raising for the wealthy Englishman. She had passed like sunshine through the light gallery and walked by his side in the luxuriant wildness of the Southern garden. When Mr. Blake died, and his task was over, his first thought was to come back and learn tidings of her. She was well, Mrs. Graham had said it, and the

words of her greeting had filled him with a soft, vague hope in which there also lurked a vague fear. Was she jealous? Jealousy is the child of love; who knew it better than Mr. Graham? Was she jealous of the dead past—so dead, so far away? But, then, what did she mean by forbidding his aunt to speak of her to him? And he knit his heavy brows as he brooded over the unwholesome thought that by calling up the memory of Lily Scot she might only want to exclude him more entirely from her life. He could not bear it; he chafed at the mere idea; he bade it begone. He rose and walked about the room. He looked at the bird in its cage, at the pictures on the walls; then he came and sat down again, and, taking up the *Illustrated London News*, he resolutely began to look over it. At first he looked idly, as we look at that of which we take no heed; then a woodcut and the printed words beneath it seemed to leap forth in lines of flame as he saw the design of a Gothic monument, with a figure kneeling upon it, and read: "The Prize Design, by Mr. R. Cowper, Architect."

With a sort of incredulous stupor he gazed at it, yet he had no need to read the letter-press beneath to understand it all. Yes, while he was making love to Lily Bertram, while he was leaving England to work abroad because her presence was a temptation he could not resist, while he was wasting time and life in a passion which might end in nothing, the enemy of his youth, the rival he had scorned, had leaped from mediocrity to genius, and secured the prize of money and honor which he had neglected to win. For, strange to say, he could not deny the rare merit of the design before him, disfigured though it was by the imperfect rendering of the woodcut. It was not merely that the kneeling figure was full of dignity and grace—that, of course, was not by Richard Cowper—it was that the monument itself was elegant and chaste. Much as he hated the man, he could not deny that there was genius in this tardy effort of his skill. He was still smarting with wounded pride and angry surprise when his aunt came back. Involuntarily, perhaps, he tossed the paper on one side.

"Well," said she, "what is there in that paper, Ned? Mrs. Foster sent it saying she knew it would interest me so much."

"Perhaps it will, auntie," he answered, with seeming

carelessness. "By-the-way, is Miss Bertram still with Miss Cowper, and is Miss Cowper still at May Lodge?"

"Yes, Miss Cowper was still at May Lodge, and May Lodge was hard by," answered Mrs. Graham, a little flurried at the sudden question. "Do you want to see Miss Cowper, Ned?" she added, hesitatingly; "because, if you do—about that college, you know—they are going away to-morrow."

"Going! where to, auntie?"

"To Cowper's Hill, and thence to France. Mr. Lennard is dead, and they are going to Saint Aubin; but, perhaps, I was not to tell."

Mr. Graham looked very calm, but every pulse of his veins felt on fire. They were going to France, to Saint Aubin, and she had forbidden his aunt to tell him. Heavens! could there be such treachery in the heart of woman? He looked at his watch and said, very quietly:

"Then, auntie, I think I will just run over to May Lodge and say a few words to Miss Cowper before I come back to dinner. Shall I?"

"Do, my dear boy; there is plenty of time. We dine at six, you know."

"I shall be here long before then," said Mr. Graham, cheerfully. And so he went.

May Lodge was soon reached.

Mr. Graham asked, not for Miss Cowper, but for Miss Bertram. The servant did not know if Miss Bertram was at home, but would see. In the mean time, Mr. Graham was shown into the dining-room on the ground-floor. It was still shrouded in brown holland. Yes, they had just come and they were going away; but on the table already lay the hateful number of the *Illustrated News* wide open, and the woodcut of the prize-drawing stared him in the face. He stood looking down at it with gloomy severity when the door opened and Miss Bertram entered. All his secret wrath, all his jealousy, fled at her aspect. His heart beat with gladness, and he went to meet her with outstretched hand. She looked at him like one petrified. She had entered the room by chance, without a thought of seeing him, and there, instead of being far away in Sicily, he stood before her.

"O Mr. Graham!" said she, vainly trying to laugh, "you have frightened me; I thought you so far away. I

came—I came for—" and she paused and gave him a scared look.

"You came for the *Illustrated News*," said he, stung at her reception; "Miss Cowper does not want me for her college now that her nephew has so distinguished himself."

"She is very pleased," said Lily, hesitatingly.

"And you, Miss Bertram, are you not pleased?" he asked.

She looked doubtfully in his face like one who knows not how to steer in order to be safe.

"Are you not pleased to see thus appreciated the bishop's tomb in the abbey of Saint Aubin *sur dun?*" he asked again, and his finger pointed to the design with vengeful severity.

He had that very moment recognized the shameless plagiarism; but Miss Bertram had been aware of it before, for she answered sadly, but without surprise:

"Yes, it is very bad—I have not dared to tell her yet."

"And why should you not dare?" he asked, with his keenest look.

"And why do you question me about it?" she answered, drawing herself up with calm pride. In a moment he was humble and penitent.

"Do not be angry," he entreated, "do not; but do tell me this—are you really going away to-morrow?"

"Yes, Miss Cowper wishes to go to-morrow."

"So the moment I return to England you leave it, and I have not seen you all these weary months."

He took her hand. They stood near the table, she sadly looking away from him, he gazing down in her face, reading it with the eagerness of one who for so long a time had not seen it.

"Mr. Graham! How odd the servant should not have told me you were here!"

So spake Miss Cowper, entering the room, and gazing at the pair with displeasure in her face. Her difference with the Mortlocks, which had never been healed, had made the mere thought of the college abhorrent to Miss Cowper. Mr. Graham, as having been connected with that unlucky college, shared in the aversion she now felt for the professor and his sister. On seeing him her first thought was that nothing he could say should induce her to go on with the college, and

her second thought was that the only course that she could follow was to avail herself of the excuse for wrath his manner toward Miss Bertram so readily afforded her. For Miss Cowper, though she was dull enough in most things, could be wonderfully quick and keen when she wanted to protect her pocket. In vain Lily had started back in some confusion, and Mr. Graham had dropped her hand. Miss Cowper looked at them both severely, and said:

"I am surprised, Mr. Graham. I see you are here on business of a very personal nature. Perhaps I may as well tell you, as I was obliged to tell Professor Mortlock long ago, that, while Miss Bertram remains under my roof, I wish her to receive no attentions unless such as a gentleman may offer a lady in common courtesy."

The blood rushed up to Mr. Graham's brow.

"Well, Miss Cowper," he said, quietly enough, "if that speech means that my presence here is unwelcome to you, I can rid you of it soon enough. I can wait till Miss Bertram is of age to pay her those attentions which are so obnoxious to you now."

"When Miss Bertram is twenty-one," answered Miss Cowper, losing her temper, "she will, I suppose, be Mrs. Richard Cowper, and the question will concern her husband, not me, Mr. Graham."

"O Miss Cowper!" cried Lily, looking with anguish at Mr. Graham.

He had turned not pale, but white. He gazed from one to the other with blazing eyes.

"You cannot mean it," he said. "You cannot mean that Miss Bertram—"

"I do," interrupted Miss Cowper; "I mean that Miss Bertram would have married my nephew three years ago if I had not opposed it. 'You must wait till you are twenty-one, Miss Bertram,' I said; 'on the very day you are of age you and Mr. Cowper may pledge yourselves, if it pleases you. Of course, he is much poorer than you are, and I will not have it said that I took advantage of your youth and inexperience to marry you to my nephew.'"

"Is that—can that be true?" said Mr. Graham, turning to Lily, who, leaning against the marble mantel-piece, stood listening to Miss Cowper with a pale, scared face.

"Yes," she answered, vaguely, "it is all true."

The blow nearly crushed him. The girl he so loved, whom he had thought all but his, who, if she had denied, had denied so kindly, had wished to become Richard Cowper's wife, and would have been so but for Miss Cowper.

"It cannot be!" he said, with sudden anguish. "What harm had I done to you that you should treat me so? It cannot be that you ever wished to marry that man, and did not at least tell me!"

Tears flowed down her pale cheeks; she clasped her hands, and said:

"I meant no harm. I had always liked you—I did not know you would care for me in that fashion—I meant no harm, Mr. Graham. And, oh! how could I tell?"

"I am very much astonished at all this," said Miss Cowper, raising her voice, "and very much displeased. Mr. Richard Cowper is not to be talked of as 'that man.' He has won the great prize—he is a man of genius; any girl may be proud to be Mr. Richard Cowper's wife."

Lily looked imploringly at Mr. Graham; but he remembered how he had laid bare his proud heart before her, and, remembering, too, that she might yet slip out of his grasp to become his triumphant rival's wife, the thought that these two would laugh together over his fond folly stung him almost to madness. He went up to her, and, in a low, even tone, thrilling with suppressed passion, he asked:

"What tempted you? Only tell me that. What tempted you?"

"Mr. Graham, what do you mean?" asked Miss Cowper, raising her voice; "am I to understand that Miss Bertram has—has been—actually flirting with you?"

"Oh, no!" he answered, bitterly; "Miss Bertram is incapable of such treachery; she only bade me wait, she only said—"

"Forget what I said, Mr. Graham," said Lily, whose eyes flashed—"forget it all, for I deny every word I said then. If you cannot esteem me enough to construe my language fairly, have at least the honor not to repeat it."

"You are right," he answered, gravely; "I beg your pardon, but say at least that when you spoke so you were not trifling with me—say that, if you can say no more."

The bitter anguish with which he spoke conquered the pride he had stung to the quick. It fell at the sound of his

voice as waves fall back in their stormy bed when the strong winds cease and sink into a low wail. Unluckily, Miss Cowper put in her say. She clasped her hands and rolled her head from side to side in amazement.

"Lily! Miss Bertram! I am shocked!" she said; "how could you trifle with Mr. Graham, with any man, so? I know that Richard has been cooler than he should be, but this was not the way to bring him back. Richard is not jealous; so bad to him, so unfair to Mr. Graham. Richard will be very angry, if ever he knows."

"That will do," said Mr. Graham, whose face wore an ashy hue. "I want to know no more. Good-by, Miss Cowper.—As for you," said he, turning to Miss Bertram and looking at her with mingled wrath and tenderness, "this is my last look of your face. Never, never again will I willingly look at one who has done me so deep a wrong! Since you never meant to say yes, why were you not merciful—why did you not say no?"

"Well, I am sure, matters must have gone very far indeed for you to speak so, Mr. Graham.—Miss Bertram, I am amazed!"

So spake Miss Cowper. Lily did not answer. Her doom had fallen upon her as some huge rock may fall upon an unwary traveler, crushing him before he even knows that danger is nigh. She had no time, no opportunity for explanation or excuse. The whirlwind of passion in which Mr. Graham had been enveloped so suddenly by Miss Cowper's assertions had sealed her fate. Something she could have said, but the suddenness of his anger roused her pride, and the presence of Miss Cowper kept her mute. She heard his last words in silent anger, then turned her proud, pale face away and let him go, and never said—alas! how could she?—"Yes, it is all or almost true, but, after all, I will never marry Richard Cowper, and I love you—I love you."

"That boy is very late," thought Mrs. Graham; "it is actually past six! He cannot have been at Miss Cowper's all this time."

At that very moment Jane came in with a note from Mr. Graham, excusing himself from joining his aunt. Mrs. Graham looked at the hurried scrawl in silent indignation. There never had been such a thing—never. She had a great mind

never to look Ned Graham in the face again—that she had.

"Please, ma'am," said Jane, "cook says the fowl—"

"A cab—get me a cab directly," cried Mrs. Graham, rising in great agitation. A sudden thought had struck her. Something had happened, something dreadful, of which she was the cause.

When the cab, which went, alas! very slowly, stopped at length at the door of Mr. Graham's house, Mrs. Graham alighted limping, and pulled the bell with a shaking hand.

"Mr. Graham," she said, as the door opened and a man-servant stood before her; "I know he is not at home, but I am his aunt, Mrs. Graham; tell him I must see him."

"Mr. Graham is just gone, ma'am," the man answered.

"Gone! Where to?"

"To Saint Aubin, ma'am."

"My goodness!" cried Mrs. Graham, aloud, "he is gone to marry Lily Scot after all!"

And she stared at the man with blank dismay.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The lamp shed its mild light on the central table in Mrs. Scot's parlor. Mrs. Scot lay asleep on the sofa; her three daughters sat at the table working. Jane was pale and thin. She had left Torquay out of health. The doctor there did not know what ailed her, and the doctor in Saint Aubin was not much wiser; but both agreed that Jane was delicate and required great care, and that her native air might perhaps restore her. Louisa was blooming as a rose. Indeed, she was a very fine young woman now; but she, too, was at home. She had flirted at the school with a professor who was much too poor to marry her. The flirtation had been delightful while it lasted, but its end had not been so pleasant. The professor had left Saint Aubin very much in debt; but he had forgotten one of Louisa's letters in his room. It had been found and read, and poor Louisa had been dismissed in disgrace. Louisa had never had very

acute feelings of any kind. She bore the loss of lover and situation with great equanimity; but she was practical, and a very matter-of-fact trouble now clouded her smooth, white brow, and prompted her to address her elder sister.

"Lily dear," said she.

Lily raised her head, which was bent over a piece of fine embroidery, and looked up.

"What is it, Louisa?" she asked, gently, but with a wearied tone in her voice that matched the sad look of her eyes and the settled paleness of her face, a lovely face still, but no longer a fresh and a happy one.

"What shall we do for money?" said Louisa, with a marked emphasis on the word "shall."

Lily pressed her hand to her forehead and looked troubled.

"I do not know," she answered, at last.

"What is it?" querulously asked Mrs. Scot's voice from the sofa.

"Did we waken you, mamma?" said Lily, unwilling to answer the question.

"Of course you did; I sleep so badly. It is all because I dislike my food so. I wish Sarah would make me some chicken-broth. It is the only thing suits me now. I am so unwell, though you won't believe it."

And, though Mrs. Scot spoke in the old discontented and plaintive tone, she spoke truly now. She had been making believe at illness all her life, and illness, as if answering the call, had come at last. She was weak and languid, and she daily wasted away, and, with the longing of all invalids for that which is hard of attainment, she pined for "home."

"I was so well when I was in England," she now added, fretfully; "I cannot help saying, Jane, it must be fancy made you think English air disagreed with you."

"Every air disagrees with me," said poor Jane, despondently.

"Well, then, you would be no worse in England than here, and I should be so much better.—Why don't we go to England, Lily?"

Poor Lily! it was hard to hear that and to know that England, the chicken-broth, and all the little dainties her invalid mother longed for, were out of her power. Poverty had laid her iron grasp upon their little home. Lily's teach-

ing and, alas! the delicate embroidery and needle-work, in which she had always excelled, were now the main stay of her mother and sisters.

A knock came at the street-door.

"Now, I wonder who that is?" said Louisa, raising her head to listen, "and Sarah is out, too."

"Don't open," cried Mrs. Scot. "It is that dreadful Mrs. Petherick. That woman will kill me. Ever since she and Captain Jekyll had that quarrel at Mrs. Morgan's, poor Mrs. Petherick has been unendurable. I beg, Lily, that you will not let her in."

"Dear mamma," gently said Lily, "it may be a message from one of my pupils changing the hour of a lesson, or—"

"Well, let them send again," petulantly said her mother; "why should you be the slave of your pupils? I wish you would not be so absurd, Lily. Pupils must obey their teachers, and not teachers their pupils."

Miss Scot neither answered nor argued, but she put down her work and left the room. She was not timid by nature, nor was there any cause for fear. Moreover, it was not late; and, though she knew the knock was not that of Mrs. Petherick, she had no false shame in admitting the visitor, whoever he or she might be. Still, there was a sort of caution in her opening of the door; and, though she held a lighted candle, which she had taken from the dining-room, she held it so that its light left her in obscurity and fell on the one seeking admittance.

"Lily—Miss Scot—do you not know me?" said a well-known voice.

"Mr. Graham!" exclaimed Lily, with a startled face; but she opened the door wide, and he came in and closed it behind him. And now they were face to face and saw each other again, and both for a few moments stood still.

"Will you not come in?" she asked, at length.

"Yes," answered he, "in here;" and he led her at once into the old well-remembered dining-room. She did not resist. She put down on the table the light she held, and waited flushed and silent.

"Lily," he said, in a moved voice, "why waste words? You know, and I need not tell you, what has brought me. We have now been parted six years. Since that sad time

we have both been tossed by more than one weary storm; let us seek rest in each other at last."

"Mr. Graham," she answered, in a moved voice, "do you know what you are doing? I cannot leave my mother now, she is so weak and ill—"

"Well," he interrupted, "what of that?—either she can be with us, or she can stay here in every comfort. I am almost rich now, Lily."

"My sister Jane is delicate," persisted Miss Scot, "and a dependent upon me."

"Lily, what matter? I earn plenty of money—money enough for us all."

"And Louisa has been foolish," persisted Lily; "but she is my sister—I never will forsake her."

"Lily, is it possible you do not understand? I tell you I am very well off. Your mother can stay here with your sisters—"

"No," said Lily, looking him steadily in the face; "where I go my mother must go, too."

"Well," he said, with an impatient sigh, "do you not understand that I will be as a son to your mother, as a brother to your sisters. They shall have a pleasant home near ours. Lily, Lily, do not be so distant! Remember the past, and do not thrust me so far away from you."

He spoke with some pathos as he looked at her. She turned her head away and did not answer; but silent tears flowed down her cheeks. Then she was in his arms, and his weary head rested on her shoulder and his eyes grew dim and his lips quivered. But, if both wept, it was not for joy that they had met again, it was for the memory of the sorrows that had come between them since their parting. Both buried their dead in that hour. She her lover beneath the sea, he his love betrayed and scorned. Both bade the past a last and sad adieu.

"And now I have found peace at last," thought he; and she—"He will be kind to mine and me; and, since William is dead, what matter about myself?"

So it is in the storms of life. We rush into the nearest haven all worn and beaten, and it is only after a time, and when the angry waves overtake us even there, that we think with a sigh—was this rest after all?

"Do you remember that evening when you left Saint

Aubin and taxed Lily Scot with treason?" Mr. Graham had said one day to Miss Bertram at Saint Olave's.

She changed color.

"Yes," she said, "I remember."

"Have you forgiven her?"

"I have," she answered, unhesitatingly.

"Would you have her for a friend again?"

"Never!"

How was it that, as his head rested on Lily's shoulder, and the little hand which he held was raised to his lips, Lily Bertram's flushed face, as she uttered that "never," flashed before him in all its lovely pride.

"Never." Ay, never should these two meet again now. It was over—all over forever. Passion had had her brief, fierce dream of mingled bliss and torment, and now came that repose which ought to be the only wish of a wise man's heart.

"Shall we not go in?" asked Lily's gentle voice.

He woke from his dream, and looked at her tenderly, and said, "Yes;" and so they went in together to the room where Mrs. Scot sat waiting impatient, but by no means ignorant of what was going on. Louisa, not seeing Lily return, thought she would see what her elder sister was doing. She left the sitting-room and went out under the arch that led to the gate. It was dark and lonely; but a gleam of light stole out from under the dining-room door, and a murmur of voices coming from within reached her ear. Louisa crept slowly to the key-hole and looked and listened. She saw nothing; but she heard and recognized Mr. Graham's voice. The drift of his discourse, too, she gathered, and, full of the news, fearful also of being detected eavesdropping, she went back to her mother and sister.

"O ma!" she cried, breathlessly, "there's Mr. Graham come back and making love to Lily in the dining-room."

"Mr. Graham!" said Mrs. Scot, with a startled face; "are you sure it is Mr. Graham, Louisa? not Mr. Cowper? Did you see him?"

"No, but I heard his voice, and I am sure it was not Mr. Cowper's voice, ma. It was Mr. Graham's."

"And what does he come for?" asked Mrs. Scot, with plaintive exasperation. "We are badly off as it is. If he takes Lily away from us, what are we to do?"

Louisa stared.

"Why, ma," said she, "don't you know that Mr. Graham is quite rich now?"

"Rich!" echoed Mrs. Scot; "that is one of Mrs. Petherick's stories."

"No, indeed, ma," persisted Louisa, "it is quite true. Mr. Morgan had it from Mrs. Randolph, who heard it when she was in England last year."

Mrs. Scot looked perplexed; then gratified; then amazed.

"And what is Mr. Graham doing with Lily all this time?" she said, sharply. "I think he ought to know that I am the person to be spoken to first. Indeed, I wonder that Lily—"

But here Mrs. Scot's wonder came to an end, for the door opened, and Lily and Mr. Graham entered the room. Mrs. Scot rose and held out her hand, and looked dignified in vain. Mr. Graham's calm, strong will swept away the weak attempt. In a few words he had said his say and won his point. He had come to marry Lily, and to take Lily, Mrs. Scot, and her other two daughters away to England. Mrs. Scot would have liked to hesitate, to raise difficulties, to ask for time to consider; but Mr. Graham seemed so convinced of success, and, to say the truth, the temptation was so great, that Mrs. Scot looked helplessly at her daughter, and, sitting down again on the sofa, surrendered to her destiny, merely saying, "Well, Mr. Graham, I am glad to see you again—after all this time, too," she added, reflectively. And then, with a weary sigh and a few words of excuse, she sank back on the sofa. Mr. Graham looked at Lily, who smiled sadly. "Yes," she thought, "this will be a good thing for my poor mother. She will have her wish of going to England at last, and all those little comforts which I could never give her she will have, too."

She sat down and mechanically took up her embroidery, as if whatever turn her destiny took her fingers must needs be busy still.

"Is that for yourself?" asked Mr. Graham, drawing his chair near hers and bending a little over her.

"Oh, no!" answered Lily.

"Then, pray, put it by," said he, guessing the truth, and gently taking the muslin from her unresisting hand.

She smiled, a little dreamily.

"We have both been tossed by more than one weary

storm," he had said. What storm was it that had drifted him back to her side at last? His words were kind, his looks were kinder still; but, surely, she had not been in his thoughts all these years.

"I wonder if the Professor de la Mare will ever come back after that fashion?" thought Louisa, watching the pair with her restless black eyes. "How nice if he had a fortune, too!"

But, though the mere thought opened a wide vista to imagination, Louisa, who hated silence, soon put it by to draw Mr. Graham into conversation. How long had he been in Saint Aubin? Half an hour. Dear me, only think! Was he still at the Cité de Jérusalem? Did he not find the place altered? Old Monsieur Petit was dead, and his daughter, that plain girl with the red hair, was married. Had he not missed her? No, Mr. Graham had not missed the red-haired Mademoiselle Petit, which, considering that he had not been more than half an hour in Saint Aubin, was not surprising.

"Then you do not know Mr. Lennard is dead?" remarked Louisa.

"When did he die?" asked Mr. Graham.

"About a week ago. They have written to Mr. Cowper, in Paris; but some say he is not the heir, after all. Miss Bertram will be coming back, I suppose, now her guardian is dead. Did you see her in England, Mr. Graham?"

"My dear Louisa," said Lily, a little reprovingly, "you forget that Miss Bertram was in a convent in Somersetshire."

So Mr. Graham was spared the answering of that question. Louisa pouted and was silent. Jane, who felt hysterical, left the room, in order not to sob aloud. "Perhaps I had better go, too," thought Louisa, seeing that her mother had forsaken her sofa; but before going she could not help putting another question:

"Do you mean to make a long stay in Saint Aubin, Mr. Graham?"

"That," said he, looking at Lily, "I do not yet know."

A faint tinge of pink rose to Lily's pale cheek, but she looked straight before her, as if she had neither heard nor understood. Louisa smiled demurely, stood up, walked to a flower-stand, turned round and trifled with a photographic

album which she took from the table, then stole out of the room and closed the door very softly.

"Lily, you heard her!" said Mr. Graham.

"Yes," she said, looking at him with calm, sad pride, "I heard her."

"How long am I to stay in Saint Aubin?"

"We have been parted some years," said Lily, her lip quivering. "You must give me time to get back to the past."

"She is thinking of that boy," said Mr. Graham to his own thoughts. "I suppose she cannot help it."

"I shall not be unreasonable," resumed Lily, with a sigh, "but why speak of that to-night?"

And she smiled very sweetly—so sweetly that she was his own Lily once more in a moment.

Mrs. Scot had left the room, "to see about it," as she said. Seeing about it meant a consultation with Sarah in the kitchen about supper.

"Mr. Graham has just come, Sarah," said Mrs. Scot, forgetting her illness in the dignity of the moment; "and, of course, he stays to supper. Do try and get something good. Mr. Graham is rich now, and he is accustomed to delicate food; and I wish him not to feel too great a difference between his home and this."

"Is Mr. Graham married?" asked Sarah, on whom the orders for supper, when she knew there was no money in the house, and the news of Mr. Graham's return, fell like a double thunderbolt.

"Married!" said Mrs. Scot, with something like contempt—"what do you mean? Why, of course, he has come to marry Miss Scot."

"He might have come sooner," said Sarah, dryly; but, remembering with a sigh that he might not have come at all, she resolved to kill the fatted calf in honor of the prodigal's return.

There was no money in the house—that is to say, Mrs. Scot had none; but Sarah had two or three napoléons in her room, and she went to take a gold piece from the little hoard.

"Won't that serve out Mr. Cowper!" thought Sarah, vindictively, as she went up-stairs. "He played fast and loose with my young mistress—I know he did. Well, he

will see now that she can do without him—the mean, pitiful fellow. And Miss Bertram, little Miss Bertram, what has become of *her*, I wonder?"

"Sarah is very presuming," thought Mrs. Scot, as she left the kitchen, rather annoyed to find her great news received so coldly. "It is a mistake to keep servants too long. I always said so. And she never told me what she was going to get for supper; and I came all the way from the drawing-room to tell her that I really must have some chicken," internally added Mrs. Scot, fretting over that small grievance, after the fashion of invalids.

"O ma!" said Louisa, meeting her, "don't go in, please. Mr. Graham is asking Lily to fix the day. I asked him how long he was going to stay, and he said he did not know, and he looked at Lily, and Lily blushed, and I left the room, and I brought away the album, because poor Willie may be in it, you know, and it would be awkward for Mr. Graham to see him."

"But I am not going to stay out of the drawing-room," said Mrs. Scot, fretfully. "I cannot do without the sofa; besides, it is not the thing. Louisa, I wonder at you!"

"Well, I shall put the book away, at all events," said Louisa, running up to her room, while Mrs. Scot remorselessly intruded on the lovers. They could not, indeed, have remained long alone. For, as Sarah was leaving the house, Captain Jekyll, coming breathlessly up the street, pushed open the door which she was going to close, and said, in his boisterous tones:

"Never mind me, my good girl, I can let myself in. Mrs. Petherick there, of course! Not yet? Ah! well, she's coming."

"Missis is not very well this evening, sir, but—"

"She will not mind me, of course not," said the captain, gently putting Sarah by, and shutting the door upon her as he spoke.

"Ha! ha!" said the captain, breaking in upon Mrs. Scot's family like an amiable burglar. "Just like me, ain't it? No notice, but here I am. Mr. Graham, I declare! Well, sir, I am glad to see you, sir. Glad, but not surprised! I always said you would come back—always. And how are you, and how long have you been here? An hour. Charming!—charming!" cried the captain, delighted to find

album which she took from the table, then stole out of the room and closed the door very softly.

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that he was getting, as well as bringing, a choice bit of news, and killing, as it were, two birds with one stone. "I declare, Saint Aubin will become an academy of architects in time. —Of course," turning to Mrs. Scot, with a fine assumption of carelessness, "you have heard all about it?"

Mrs. Scot, who felt more annoyed at the captain's intrusion than inquisitive about his news, crossly replied that she could not imagine what the captain meant.

"To be sure, you can't. Well, here it is. That Mr. Cowper, whom we all pooh-poohed, and who made such a bad hand of Monsieur Duhamel's practice, has turned out a genius after all. What do you think of his winning the great prize of a hundred thousand francs—four thousand pounds, ma'am—for a tomb, or a chapel, or a statue? Four thousand pounds!—a made man, ma'am!—a made man! Mind you," added the captain, laying his finger to his nose, "*I* always said there was something fine in that Dick Cowper—always."

Mrs. Scot and Lily heard the captain in amazed silence.

"Four thousand pounds," thought Mrs. Scot. "Why, Mr. Cowper will be much better off than Mr. Graham."

And Lily, looking at Mr. Graham's rigid features and knit brow, wondered if he had striven for the prize, and failed.

"I suppose he is not so clever as Mr. Cowper, after all," she thought, with that lurking doubt of him which had always been in her heart.

"Dear me!" at length said Mrs. Scot, "how odd! I suppose Mr. Cowper will come in for Mr. Lennard's property, too."

"Not unless the old boy left a will, which I doubt, Mrs. Scot, which I doubt, because—"

"Mr. Graham, you are not going!" cried Mrs. Scot, as Edward Graham rose. "Why, we are going to have supper; you must not go."

But Mr. Graham was going. Her entreaties, Lily's gentle looks, availed not. He was going. The hated name of Richard Cowper had acted as a baleful spell. He was too proud to expose the deceiver, but he detested him too much to listen to his praises. So he took his leave, rather cold and forbidding, and not much like a lover, unless when he took

Lily's hand, and, pressing it gently in his own strong palm, looked kindly in her blushing face.

The captain had a great mind to go with him, but, wisely remembering that Mrs. Petherick could not have the start of him at this late hour, he remained, much to Mrs. Scot's annoyance, to partake of that lady's supper.

"Drat that captain!" thought poor vulgar Sarah, as she laid the smoking dishes, prepared by her skill, on the dining-room table. "Was it for him I went and changed my gold piece, I should like to know?"

But the captain went at last, and Mrs. Scot, who felt very weary, retired to her own room.

"O Lily!" cried Louisa, eagerly, "you will tell us all about it now?"

Even Jane, who had got over her hysterical feeling, looked inquisitive, but Lily, smiling, said:

"What have I to tell, you silly things? It is only an old story which was left off and is begun anew."

She smiled and looked happy enough, but when she was alone in her room the smile died away and her eyes grew dim with tears. Louisa need not have carried off the photographic album, there was nothing there Mr. Graham should not have seen. The image his eyes were not to gaze on was safely locked in Lily's drawer. She took it out now and looked at it long and tenderly, then, closing her eyes, she held it to the light of her candle and let it burn away till the heat reached her fingers and compelled her to drop it on the floor, where it smouldered until it was no more than a blackened scroll.

And Mr. Graham, going home to the Cité de Jérusalem, was thinking, "If I wished to be revenged upon her, surely I have my wish. The wife of that man—Heaven help her! Perhaps she will not marry him, after all. Let her, or let her not, I am a stone, so far as she is concerned."

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CHAPTER XLV.

A MAN'S life may flow idly for years, but let it only reach a rock that, rising from the bed of the stream, seems to check its course, and it leaps over the obstacle at once, and rushes down swift and reckless as a mountain torrent. So was it now with Edward Graham. He had not cared much for marriage; he had loitered on the brink of that dangerous shore, but, when he was baffled in the love he had set his heart on, marriage, and marriage with the girl of whom Miss Bertram had been jealous, was all he could or would think of. He had spared Miss Scot that first evening, but the very next day he became pressing and exacting, and, before the end of the week, Mrs. Graham received a brief letter from her nephew, asking her to come and see him married to her goddaughter, and promising that this should be the last time she need cross the Channel on their account. "We all leave Saint Aubin after luncheon," wrote Mr. Graham—"Mrs. Scot and her daughters for England, Lily and I for Italy."

"Do come, dear godmamma," added Lily, in her delicate handwriting, by way of postscript.

"Then it is settled," thought Mrs. Graham, with a sigh. "I ought to be glad that he is marrying Lily, after all, but Miss Bertram was a dear little thing too, only he could not marry them both, poor fellow, and I dare say it was Lily he liked best. Monday week, is it? Well, I suppose we must go to Saint Aubin this once more!"

And in Saint Aubin she arrived on a lovely morning, fresh and clear, and she found Mr. Graham looking very happy, and Lily as fresh and fair as ever, both waiting in the inn-yard to welcome her. Mrs. Graham's face cleared wonderfully as she looked at them, for, as she said to herself, "she saw now it was all right."

"And so you are actually to be married next Monday?" said Mrs. Graham, gazing at them very kindly.

"Yes, auntie, we actually are," said Mr. Graham, smiling; "did you doubt it?"

"Heaven forbid!" she exclaimed, with a fervor which made them both laugh.

They seemed light-hearted enough, as, indeed, why should they not be? Had they not suffered all these years, and was

not the time when they could lay down their burden awhile come at last?

"I am so glad," she said again, forgetting, in the pleasure of the moment, a troublesome thought that had been with her all the way from Dieppe.

They walked out of the inn-yard as a traveling-carriage rattled in.

Lily looked at it.

"I wonder who that is?" she said.

"I saw some ladies inside," answered Mr. Graham.

They were going up the middle of the street of the Haute-ville, where Mrs. Scot lived, when a sound of wheels and a jingling of bells made them look round and step aside. The traveling-carriage was coming up, and soon overtook them. As it passed by them one of the ladies within looked out, and, seeing Mrs. Graham, she smiled and waved her hand, then her flushed bright face vanished, and the carriage went on, and Mr. Graham looked after it with set features and compressed lips.

"Who was that?" asked Mrs. Graham, looking startled.

"I think it must be Miss Bertram," answered Lily. "I know she is expected."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Graham, rather troubled, "I was almost sure I saw her on board the steamer. She staid on the deck all the time, and there was such a bitter wind. What brings her back?"

"She will be of age in a few days," quietly remarked Lily.

Mr. Graham said nothing. Miss Bertram had come back for her birthday—for that seventeenth of September to which he had once looked forward with such eager hope. She had come back in time to hear his wedding-bells. What more could he ask for? If he wanted to show the fair traitress all his scorn, had he not his wish?

"Did you never meet Miss Bertram in England?" asked Lily, who was struck, perhaps, with the rigid expression of his features.

"Oh, yes!" answered he, with a smile. "I saw her at Cowper's Hill."

And his smile was so quiet and cheerful that Miss Scot's momentary doubt vanished. Even Mrs. Graham, seeing him

so calm, thought, "Young men have fancies, and this was one, I suppose."

And so they reached Mrs. Scot's door, happy and at peace.

"Strange, how little I felt on meeting her again!" thought Mr. Graham. "I would rather not have seen her; but, still, how cold that glimpse of her face left me! I suppose there is a sense of wrong so keen that it destroys love in its very root and being. Dear Lily"—and his eyes rested kindly on her as they crossed Mrs. Scot's threshold together—"I shall never know the storm of passion and its wreck with you. It was gentle and tender love from the first, and thank Heaven that you, and none other, are to be mine at last!"

In this sense of sweet repose Mr. Graham spent the days that followed. Poor Lily was very busy and rather worried; but he had nothing to do save to luxuriate in her society, and to brood, as it were, over the happy knowledge that she was his now, all his, and forever. There was no alloy in his feelings, and, though silent, they were so plainly expressed that Mrs. Graham's satisfaction increased as the days slipped away one after another.

"Ned, I'm glad you are going to be settled at last," said Mrs. Graham to her nephew on the Saturday morning. They had been talking together of his approaching marriage, and this was the conclusion of Mrs. Graham on the subject.

"And so am I, auntie," he replied, smiling.

They were sitting on the terrace at the end of the garden, enjoying the delicious freshness of the morning. A light mist floated over the rich landscape in the valley. Here and there a bit of deeper green told of cool shade, and bright, sparkling patches of yellow light showed where the warm sunshine lay on the stubble. The silvery river flowed far away through the fertile land. White houses and roofs and church-spires glittered in the sun; a summer sky, pale and pure, with faint white clouds floating slowly to the west, spread over all.

"Now, if it were possible," said Mrs. Graham, "how nice it would be for you to live here in this quaint old place, with the beautiful green country round!—would it not, Ned?"

"No, auntie, not now. Once I should have liked it well enough; but—not now."

He said the last words slowly, then rose, and went to the

edge of the terrace, and stood there, gazing on the fair prospect below.

"I wonder what I was about!" thought Mrs. Graham. "As if he could stay here and live next door to little Lily Bertram!"

Here the appearance of Jane, coming up with a pale and cross face, interrupted Mrs. Graham's soliloquy. Jane, whom the approaching wedding did not gladden, and whom the departure of the family for England exasperated, sat down opposite Mrs. Graham, and said, with a fretful sigh:

"I wish it would rain!"

"Rain, my dear?"—with a startled face.

"Yes, pour. I wish it would. I hate the fine weather!"

"Oh, my dear! why so?"

"Because it does me no good, and I hate going to England; and I wish I were dead, I do!" Whereupon Jane began to cry.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Graham, vigorously. "You want a change, and a change you shall have. You shall stay with me, and I will take you about. Yes, I will, to—to concerts, and music-bands, and the Crystal Palace, and Hampton Court, and all that," comprehensively added Mrs. Graham, still speaking vigorously.

There had been very little pleasure in Jane's life, so she did not receive Mrs. Graham's programme with the ungracious coldness of a town-bred girl accustomed to balls and parties. Her tears dried, her face cleared, a faint tinge of color rose to her cheeks, and the dawn of a smile played around her white lips.

"Thank you, Mrs. Graham," said she, with a sparkle in her languid eyes; "that will be nice." Then, without hesitation or pause, "You know Lily Bertram is dying?"

A thunderbolt falling at her feet would not have filled Mrs. Graham with more consternation than these words so abruptly spoken.

"Dying?" she said, vaguely.

"Yes," answered Jane; "it seems she took cold in the crossing, and that, unless her complaint takes a turn by next Monday, she cannot live."

"She will be twenty-one on Monday," said Mr. Graham.

He had come back to his aunt's chair, and stood behind

it. Mrs. Graham looked up at him. He was very white, but very calm.

"Yes, and she was going to be married, too," continued Jane—"married to Mr. Cowper, you know. They say he is coming to take possession of his uncle's property, and that they were to be married at the end of the month."

The tears rushed to Mrs. Graham's eyes.

"My poor little Lily," said she, clasping her hands, "dying! I can't believe it. I'll go and see her—I must—I will!" said she, vehemently, rising as she spoke, and looking at Mr. Graham.

He was gazing straight before him with an absent look.

"She is so young," he said, in a low tone, and he walked away slowly down a side-path.

Mrs. Graham was not one to linger over a resolve. Without heeding Jane, she walked up toward the house, opened the street-door, and, as she was, with her garden-hat on her, she went straight to the next house, and, finding no servant, was half-way up the stairs, when she met Miss Cowper.

"Where is she?" said Mrs. Graham, impetuously. "I must see her, poor child—poor child! She can't be dying, you know."

"She is very ill," replied Miss Cowper, despondently. "I was going to beg that you would come, Mrs. Graham; she has been asking for you the whole morning."

"Well, and where is she?" said Mrs. Graham, looking impatiently at every door.

Miss Cowper silently opened one, and showed Mrs. Graham into a darkened room. A white bed gleamed in the twilight, and, as Mrs. Graham drew near, a flushed face looked up at her from the pillow.

"She is so young," thought Mrs. Graham, echoing the words of Edward Graham.

"O Mrs. Graham!" said Lily, in a low, breathless voice, "it is so good of you to come. Please do tell Mr. Graham—I am twenty-one after to-morrow, you know—well, please do tell Mr. Graham that I have made my will—if I live to sign it, he shall have this house—he can live in it with Lily Scot," she added, with a little low laugh, very strange to hear. "And you may tell him, too—that I never—never meant to deceive him—I did not, indeed."

"My dear—my dear," sobbed Mrs. Graham, putting out her hand, which Lily seized eagerly. A sister who was standing by came forward, parted them gently, took Mrs. Graham by the arm, and led her out of the room.

"Madame," said she, mildly, when they stood outside the door, "the doctor has forbidden this. She cannot see any one —any one," added the sister, raising her forefinger.

Mrs. Graham submitted; she had been by many a sick-bed, and knew what was right; but Miss Cowper, who now joined them, said, in an affronted tone:

"She is very presuming—she will have it all her own way. Every one," irritably added Miss Cowper, "wants to lead me, professors and sisters—they are all alike."

The sister did not understand Miss Cowper's words, which were spoken in English, but her calm, shrewd look showed that their drift was not lost upon her.

"Good-by, madame," said she to Mrs. Graham. She was reëntering the room, when Mrs. Graham held her back.

"Do you think she will die?" she asked, in pitiful broken French.

"She is very young," said the sister, gently; "but," added she, in a less hopeful tone, "she is very ill," and with that she went in.

"Poor little Lily!" said Mrs. Graham, brokenly—"poor little thing, skipping up and down stairs with her slipshod feet;" and, crying as she spoke, she went down-stairs, and left the house, forgetting the very existence of Miss Cowper, who looked after her from the landing, swelling with indignation at such treatment.

Mrs. Graham's heart was very full—too full for silence.

"Where is my nephew?—where is Mr. Graham?" she asked of Sarah, whom she met under the arched gateway of Mrs. Scot's house.

"Mr. Graham is gone for a walk, ma'am," answered the nurse, looking keenly at Mrs. Graham's disturbed face. "I heard him telling Miss Scot that his head ached, and that he would take a walk in the country."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Graham, with a stifled sigh.

"And how is Miss Lily, ma'am, if I may ask?" resumed Sarah; "people do say she is so awful bad," added she, in a plausible tone.

"Nonsense," sharply said Mrs. Graham, walking in; "I suppose she took cold on board the boat—that's all."

"Yes, ma'am, they say 'twas on board the steamer Miss Lily took cold, and that it has fallen on her chest; and they say, too, Mr. Cowper, who came to marry her, is ready to shoot himself—they do."

"Then they know all about it," said Mrs. Graham, dryly.

She went in and found Mrs. Scot alone with Louisa, and lecturing that blooming young lady, who listened with hands clasped resignedly on her lap and raised eyes that seemed to tell the ceiling, "Now just hear what nonsense ma is uttering."

Mrs. Scot, who liked to talk with her eyes shut, was not aware of her daughter's disrespectful attitude till Mrs. Graham entered the room; looking up to see who came in, she at once detected Louisa, and said, very sharply:

"Louisa, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!—Mrs. Graham, if you had a daughter, and if you were advising her for her good, and if she listened to you after that fashion, what would your feelings be?"

"I had a daughter once," very sadly answered Mrs. Graham.

This sobered Mrs. Scot, and silenced the angry exclamation that was rising to Louisa's lips. The mother looked ashamed of her forgetfulness, and the daughter rather relieved at the turn the conversation was taking. She did not care about Mrs. Graham, but then there was no need that the good lady should hear too much about the professor, and discretion was not Mrs. Scot's forte.

"I have just been to see little Lily," said Mrs. Graham, with a deep sigh; "I fear the poor child is ill."

Mrs. Scot, still feeling awkward, said that she had heard as much. Louisa, triumphing in the defeat of her parent, said, dogmatically:

"Lily has her father's complaint. She will not get over it."

"How can you tell?" asked her mother, crossly.

Louisa sharply replied that she was sure of it. Another contest was imminent. Mrs. Graham was in no mood to listen or to make peace, and she hastened to say:

"Sarah tells me that Ned has gone out walking; do you know what direction he has taken?"

"I never know anything," said Mrs. Scot, fretfully; "they tell me nothing, you know."

Whereupon Louisa unhesitatingly declared that Mr. Graham had gone in the direction of Saint Aubin *sur dun.* Mrs. Scot asked how she could tell.

"I saw him," triumphantly said her daughter.

Whereupon Mrs. Scot shut her eyes in her turn and looked resigned.

"Then I shall go after him," Mrs. Graham hastened to say. And, with something like relief, spite the cloud on her mind, she walked out of the room.

"I shall certainly advise Ned not to see too much of his wife's family," thought Mrs. Graham, as she left the house. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! what *are* young people nowadays?"

She took a brisk walk, she never could walk slowly, and went as far as Saint Aubin *sur dun*, but saw no sign of Mr. Graham, for the excellent reason that he had never been there. She met him, however, on her return coming out from a shady lane which straggled by large market-gardens, close to the town.

"O Ned!" said she, going up to him in her sudden way, and laying her hand on his arm—"Ned, I have seen her—and she is very ill."

"Aunt, I am sorry."

He spoke sadly and gravely, but he also spoke composedly.

"O Ned! if she lives to sign her will she will bequeath her house to you, and she hopes that Lily and you will live in it."

"Let us hope rather that she and Mr. Cowper will live in that house," said Mr. Graham, with subdued bitterness.

"Oh! but that was all such a mistake," cried Mrs. Graham; "she meant no harm, Ned."

"She told me so, too, and I did not believe it," said he, with flashing eyes, "and, if I lived till doomsday, I should not believe it; besides, I have just met Mr. Cowper, looking much cut up, as he well may be. And now, auntie, do me a favor. Let us talk no more of Miss Bertram. Let us both hope that she will recover, and live, and be happy, but her doom is to be decided by next Monday, and next Monday is to be my wedding-day. I wish her well, God knows I do! I even forgive her the great wrong she did me, but I wish to

forget her—let her be to me as one who never existed, as I shall be to her."

"Ned, you are hard!" Mrs. Graham could not help saying.

"I have suffered," he answered, looking vaguely before him, "and suffering does not always make us meek."

They said no more, but, when they passed by the house of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where Lily Bertram lay between life and death, Mrs. Graham looked pitifully toward one window, and her nephew knit his brow and compressed his lips and looked straight before him.

The whole of that afternoon, which Mr. Graham spent as usual in Lily's society, his aunt watched him. He was as cheerful and as attentive as ever to his affianced wife; his brow was calm, his look was clear, but now and then it became very absent, the look of one who gazes at something very far away.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"You know Miss Bertram is given up?" said Mrs. Petherick.

Mrs. Scot, who was addressed, and whom the mere thought of sickness and death depressed, replied very crossly that Captain Jekyll had just told her Miss Bertram was a little better.

"Of course he did," said Mrs. Petherick, "but I thought, Mrs. Scot, you knew what Captain Jekyll's news were worth."

"I find it very hard that every one should be ill or dying," resumed Mrs. Scot, in a lamentable tone, "and I think it really unkind that every one should come with such news to me in my present state of health."

"Well, but, my dear Mrs. Scot, I don't invent the news," argued Mrs. Petherick, who thought this remark personal.

Mrs. Scot, who looked by no means sure that Mrs. Petherick did not invent her news, sighed profoundly, and abstained from giving any answer. Jane and Louisa exchanged a few whispered remarks, then were silent. Lily sat lean-

ing back in her chair by the window, where she was sewing in the light of the setting sun that streamed with long, slanting rays of gold into the room. She let her needle flag, and, leaning her cheek upon her hand, looked gently sad.

"Poor Lily!" she said, "I hope she will recover," and she sighed; and Mr. Graham, who sat opposite her, looked at her and read every line of her face as if he had never gazed on it before. What a fair white brow spread beneath the soft, dark hair! How clear and fine were those delicate eyebrows! The dreamy eyes were both gentle and tender. Every line of that charming countenance spoke of repose and peace. Could passion, or ungentle emotion, or sorrow even, ever disturb the graceful harmony of those serene features? How was this? In what region beyond grief, or strife, or unquiet thoughts did this fair Lily move that they never reached her? And he sighed a little weariedly, while the argument about the other Lily's life and death went on near him, and Mrs. Graham, who sat out of the sunlight in the shadowy part of the room, looked at him with tears in her blue eyes.

"And I am sure Mrs. Morgan, who had just met Miss Cowper, who was crying, could not be mistaken," insisted Mrs. Petherick, getting affronted at Mrs. Scot's obstinate belief in Captain Jekyll's declaration that Miss Bertram was a little better.

"If Miss Bertram had not been better, Miss Cowper would not have been out," said Mrs. Scot, rather triumphantly.

"Oh! she has to see to Mr. Cowper, of course," promptly answered Mrs. Petherick. "Every one knows that Mr. Cowper is in debt up to his very ears; that he wanted to marry Miss Bertram, and that there is some terrible to do about his great prize. I never quite believed in it, for my part, and, of course, Mr. Lennard's death and no will must have been a sore blow to him."

And so the conversation drifted away from Miss Bertram and her illness, until it flagged and almost ceased, and the room became oppressively still. What is there in the air, even though the sky be clear, that often tells us when a storm is coming on? What subtile signs are they which sight and hearing at once detect? A little cloud drifting by, a low wind rising, then falling down again, a sudden stillness, a lightning-flash, a thunder-clap, and it is done, the storm has

come and marred in a moment the fair face of Nature. As it is with the world we live in, so is it with that world of human beings and their passions and emotions which seems so smooth and is so pregnant with all the elements of wrath and storm. Mrs. Petherick, annoyed at the dullness which had fallen upon them all, made another vigorous attempt at conversation.

"I always knew Mr. Cowper would not turn out well," she said, nodding shrewdly. "There was something what d'ye call him about the man."

"I really don't understand," irritably replied Mrs. Scot. "What can you mean, Mrs. Petherick?"

Mrs. Petherick did not attempt to answer. No one, indeed, tried to speak. Every one looked at the door, outside of which strange sounds were heard, as of one seeking admittance, which was vehemently denied.

"O sir, don't!—oh! pray don't!—indeed, sir, you can't!" the voice of Sarah was saying, in low, though disturbed accents. "Indeed—indeed, sir—" She said no more. The door opened, a tall, manly figure entered the room, and with his entrance the storm broke upon them all.

William Lennard looked neither right nor left. He went straight to where Lily sat, and, standing before her in the red light of the setting sun, he said, in a low, broken voice:

"Lily, you know me! I am not dead, but living, Lily!"

Mrs. Scot screamed, but who heeded her then? William held out his two hands to Lily Scot. She rose slowly, her face was ashy, her lips were white.

"William! William!" she said; and her hands were clasped in his.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, with a sob.

But, if he did not know, she quickly remembered that a great wide gap stretched between them now. The white work she was stitching—it was part of her wedding *trousseau*—had slipped on the floor at the feet of Mr. Graham, who was gazing at them both with strange calmness. In vain, with a useless instinct of concealment, Jane and Louisa went up to their recovered cousin, and, standing between him and Mr. Graham, said: "O William! William!" and began to cry. In vain the young man's jealous eye had flashed as he saw his rival, and Lily's fair cheek had grown deadly pale.

Mr. Graham remained impassive. It seemed to him later that he had always known this was coming, that he had always felt that William Lennard had not been really drowned, but would rise from the depth of the sea-waves some day, and claim back, if not Lily, who was pledged to him, at least Lily's love, which she could not alienate from her sailor cousin; so, while Jane and Louisa uttered exclamations, while their mother went into hysterics, and Mrs. Petherick's voice was heard, he looked at these two as they stood before him in the red sunlight with a sort of apathy. It was not Lily's love he wanted, but the rest which Lily could give him. So, when at last she turned a startled, frightened look upon him, he only smiled, and, rising, held out his hand to the young man.

"Mr. Lennard," said he, "I wish you joy of your safe return. You know, or may guess, what every one believed your fate to be. You come back to find many changes, but I for one am heartily glad to see you safe and sound once more."

Lily, as she heard him, looked piteously at William. And yet she seemed relieved at Mr. Graham's composure. She yielded to her fate with the submission which had been her lot through life, and so stood between the present and the past, silent and pale, but also resigned.

"William," she said, a little faintly, "you have not spoken to my mother yet."

But William took no notice of poor Mrs. Scot, who was sobbing on the sofa. He took no notice even of Mr. Graham's outstretched hand—he only gave him one look of utter abhorrence, then turned his burning eyes upon Lily.

"What were your last words when we parted?" he asked, in a low, distinct voice.

Lily tried to answer, but her lips moved and uttered no sound. Mrs. Scot, however, had heard the question, and, clasping her hands, said, distractedly:

"William, William, have you come back only to make mischief, and be the undoing of us all?"

"What were your last words when we parted?" asked William, again.

"God knows how I grieved for you!" answered Lily, at last. "God knows how I bless him for having restored you, William!"

"Do you?" said William, savagely. "I have not seen my uncle yet. I come to you, and this is my welcome. Thank you, Miss Scot—thank you."

"Your uncle is dead," said Mrs. Scot, with a moan; "and it is just like you, William, to rush in and not know it. Mr. Cowper has come to claim the property, I believe; but I should say you are the rightful heir."

"My uncle is dead!" exclaimed William, turning very white. "What next?"

No one answered; only Mrs. Petherick remarked:

"I feel sure Mr. Lennard made no will. I heard him saying as much again and again. 'Let them fight it out,' said he."

William did not heed her. His lot had been a hard one; he had been wrecked, and he had fought for his life with the furious waves, that swallowed others by his side. He had wandered through deserts where savage beasts, and men more savage than they, were ready to spring upon and destroy him. He had escaped it all, and made his way home, through fatigue and toil that would have killed one less strong, and this was his welcome! The girl he loved was going to marry another man, and his uncle's home was closed upon him by the pitiless hand of death! Perhaps it was not wonderful that the look which he now cast round the room was somewhat stern.

"I am not wanted here," said he, bitterly.—"Good-by, Mrs. Scot.—Good-by, Miss Scot;" and, giving Mr. Graham a last look of hate, he walked out, and did not take the trouble to close the door after him.

"Do shut that door, Louisa!" plaintively said Mrs. Scot, who had a horror of draughts.

Lily looked at her future husband, and said, firmly:

"Forgive him, Mr. Graham; he will know better later. Now he is excited and unjust," she added, her white lips quivering.

"I call it dreadful to come and startle people so," said Mrs. Scot, a little indignantly. "If William had had a particle of consideration for Lily and me, he would have prepared us for his return. He always was a dreadful boy."

Mr. Graham looked at Lily, and said, quietly:

"Poor fellow! Yes, Lily, you are right. He will know better later."

She sank down on her chair with a weary sigh, then took up her work, and went on with it, as we must go on with life, sad or gay though it may be. Mr. Graham did not stay late that evening. Mrs. Petherick talked, and Louisa's tongue went freely; but there was an awkwardness in the discourse that made it worse than silence.

"This has tried you," he kindly said to Lily, in a tone which could not reach even Mrs. Petherick's attentive ear. "You will be more yourself to-morrow."

With a grateful look, Lily gave him her hand.

"You know you can rely upon me," she said.

Sarah, who was bringing in the lamp, gave them a stealthy glance as she placed it on the table, and she heard Mr. Graham answering:

"Yes, Lily, I know I can."

It was thus they parted.

"I have such a headache!" said Mrs. Scot, uttering an exasperated sigh as she looked at Mrs. Petherick. "Poor William! I am so glad he was not drowned!" and, being so glad, Mrs. Scot began to cry, for she saw that Lily was very pale, and that Mr. Graham had gone away long before his usual hour, and she really did not know how it would all end. "And Lily's wedding-day next Monday, and our trunks packed and all, and shall we ever go to England now?" was Mrs. Scot's lamentable but internal conclusion.

"And so that was William, was it?" remarked Mrs. Graham, who had been a silent witness of the brief but significant scene; then, with that awkward habit of speaking her thoughts aloud, she added:

"What a fine young man he has grown! Quite handsome! But, don't you think, Lily, he should have written to tell you he was alive?"

Lily did not answer; but Mrs. Petherick said, in her cheerful way:

"I have no doubt he wrote, Mrs. Graham, and that the letter was lost."

"I have such a headache!" said Mrs. Scot, again.

Mrs. Petherick took the hint, all the more willingly that there was nothing more to learn; and, advising her dear Mrs. Scot to go to bed early, she rose, and left the family to their own reflections. Lily at once put her work away and went up-stairs. Mrs. Graham looked after her.

"Do you know," said she, rubbing her nose, and again speaking with her incorrigible frankness—"do you know, I am afraid Lily may be making a sad mistake? Now, suppose she is still fond of William; ought she—"

"Still fond of William!" almost screamed Mrs. Scot, clasping her hands in amazement and indignation. "My dear friend, what do you mean? Was she ever fond of him, poor boy? She agreed to marry him because he worried her into it. Indeed, we all teased her, I am sorry to say. But first love, Mrs. Graham—first love! Oh, there is nothing like it after all!"

"I suppose so," answered Mrs. Graham, absently. "I think," she added, "that I will go and see how poor little Lily Bertram is going on. Mrs. Petherick's account has made me miserable."

No sooner had the door closed upon her than Mrs. Scot burst into tears.

"Mark my words," said she, addressing her two daughters, when she could speak, "Lily will never be Mr. Graham's wife. That unfortunate boy has come and undone us all. Heaven knows," added the poor lady, "I do not wish that he had staid at the bottom of the sea; but, oh! if he had not come back before next Tuesday, what a blessing it would have been!"

When Mr. Graham left Mrs. Scot's sitting-room, Sarah Webster, who had lingered in the room, went out, too, saying, with some eagerness:

"I'll open the door for you, sir."

But once they were both under the archway her manner altered.

"O sir!" she said, in a low, impressive tone, "will you let me say a few words to you before you go—just a few words?"

Her sunken dark eyes glittered, her sallow cheeks were flushed, her thin, nervous frame quivered with strange excitement. Mr. Graham had often watched this woman, and wondered at the smothered fire that seemed to be ever burning within her. He now looked at her curiously. He felt so wearied and so cold—how could she be so eager and so impassioned?

"What is it?" he asked, with his hand on the lock of the old gate.

"O sir! not here, if you please," said Sarah, opening the dining-room door, and looking at him beseechingly.

A cold, surprised, and rather haughty look was Mr. Graham's answer; but he remembered that this woman had reared Lily Scot, and he yielded to the invitation. He entered the dining-room, where a light was burning on the table, and Sarah quickly followed, and closed the door after her.

"O sir!" she said, breathlessly, "don't you go and believe a word of it. I know how they will all try to poison you against my dear young lady, just out of jealousy, because they say you are so rich; but don't you believe it—only you take her away, when you are married, keep her traveling and gay like, and it will all be right, sir."

She had put her two hands on the table, and leaned forward to look at him, with mingled imperiousness and entreaty. What strange energy there was in her, again thought Mr. Graham, and how terribly clear it was to him that this marriage of his with Lily Scot was the life and death of the family! He had guessed as much already, but Sarah Webster put it before him in her vulgar ardor with cruel plainness.

"Well," he said, wearily, "what next, Sarah?"

Before she could answer, the door opened, and Lily appeared on the threshold of the room. She had heard a sound of voices as she was going up-stairs, and she had come to see who was within.

Sarah could not repress a guilty start, and Mr. Graham's gravity was significant. For a few moments Lily stood looking at them both, pale, silent, and motionless; then, with her quiet dignity, she said:

"My mother wants her sago, Sarah." And Sarah, quailing beneath her young mistress's look, left the room without a word. Lily walked straight up to Mr. Graham.

"Well," said she, rather excitedly, and trying to laugh, her calm manner all gone, "what were you doing here with Sarah, Mr. Graham? Was she reversing the positions, and giving me a character?"

"Lily!" and he held out his hand and drew her toward him, and looked down in her face.

"You may look at me," she said, quickly and proudly. "I am not afraid."

"Poor Lily!" he half sighed. The hand he held trembled within his, the eyes he was gazing into opened wide, then closed their weary lids. "Poor Lily!" he said, again, and, stooping, he kissed her, and in that kiss his first love died at last, and forever.

What passed after this Lily never knew. Perhaps nothing passed. She was shivering in every limb, and sank down on the nearest chair. When she looked around her by the dull light of the candle burning on the table, she saw that she was alone and that Mr. Graham was gone.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Up the street, far into the lonely country, went Mr. Graham in the deepening twilight. The land lay flat around the little Norman town; soft, dark clouds drooped down to the edge of the low horizon, and seemed to inclose all things for the long, calm slumbers of the night. The evening was gray and chill, but its cool breath was still tender. No penetrating keenness abode in those white mists which floated over the dark green of the pastures or the pale patches of the yellow stubble. They rose slow, insidious perhaps, but fair and gentle, from the bosom of the earth, and seemed to greet the lonely man, who left behind him the dwellings of his fellow-men to seek their companionship.

Not untruly has Nature been named the great mother. Motherlike, she calls us, and, though we heed her not, she waits, and bides her hour patient and eternal. She knows that in sorrow and calamity and abandonment that hour will surely come. She is ever ready to forgive our ingratitude to welcome us back, her prodigal children, and to lure us to her society with a thousand tender wiles. The clouds in the sky, the shrill voice of the wind, the moaning of the sea, the ripple of unseen waters, the cool shadow of forest-trees, the very grasses beneath our feet, all have a language which sounds sweeter than music to ears wearied by the speech and falsehood of man.

Edward Graham did not feel wronged or betrayed as he

left the little Norman town behind him; but he felt very wearied. It seemed to him that he had been tossing on the shores of life for more years than he could reckon, and that rest, any rest, would be welcome at last. Once before he had felt thus, and he had sought for the repose he wanted with Lily; but Lily had never loved him, never—not even when he first saw her sweet face. He had been a desirable lover then, as he had been now, and that was all. He was not angry with her now that he recognized this truth. No jealousy of William Lennard was in his heart; he could imagine him Lily's husband, and that heart feel no quicker throb at the thought. "It must have been very long ago that I loved her," was his sad, inevitable conclusion. "I wonder if we married next Monday how we should get on? As others do, I suppose. A little cold—a little tired of each other, till children bound us more closely to the home life, and time strengthened the bond of our companionship, or death broke it forever. Poor Lily! I do not think she would have rejoiced over my grave, yet, if she found herself still young and free, could she have helped thinking of him? I suppose not. There are feelings which no power can control, which are a part of our being, and they must either yield to the decay of time or abide with us to the bitter end." And so, speculating on the present and the past, and looking at the possibilities of things, as if he were a stranger to all that had happened, and might happen yet, he went along the high-road, turning neither right nor left, until it was night, and the mists cleared away, and the stars came out and glittered coldly in the darkness of the sky. He looked up at them vaguely, as if he wondered who and what they were, for personal thought was drifting from him, and it was mechanically that he at length turned his back on the lonely country. Little by little the sights and sounds of life met him as he walked on. The lights of Saint Aubin shone before him. A watch-dog barked in a distant farm-yard, a church-clock struck the hour far away, and a peasant sitting sideways on his tired horse rode slowly by and uttered his courteous *bonsoir*, as he turned into a side-path.

"*Bonsoir*," mechanically answered Edward Graham, and he wondered who the man was, and to what sort of a home he and his horse were going. Indeed, he was ever wondering in this dull mood of his. Everything was so

strange, so old, and yet so new. As he passed by the Asile where he had once seen the old men and women and Sister Martha, he stopped to look at it. Was it the other day that he had been there with Lily, or was it years? The door was ajar, and an old man was stumbling in. Mr. Graham caught sight of a sister's white cap, and the gentle though reproving voice which said, "Late again, Père Vincent," sounded like Sister Martha's.

"I went to ask," the old man answered.

"Well?"

"Oh, so bad—so bad!"

The door closed, and Mr. Graham walked on. What, or perhaps who, was it that was so bad? He had not solved the question by the time he reached the late Mr. Bertram's house. There, too, he stopped, and looked, and sighed. Poor little Lily!—was she really dying? He did not think of the young beauty, love of whom had so short a time ago been his fierce torment, but of Mr. Bertram's little daughter, with her tangled hair and her laughing eyes, and it seemed a pity that such a child should die. "Poor little Lily!" he thought, again. He was passing on, when the carved gate opened, and a man came out into the street. Mr. Graham knew him at once—it was Richard Cowper. A thrill—the memory of his old hatred—passed through him as he saw that pale face and fair beard in the gas-light; then it subsided into a dead calm. Even that was gone.

"Ah! good-evening," said Mr. Cowper, with unusual gravity of aspect.

"Good-evening," answered Edward Graham, walking on.

Mr. Cowper walked by his side.

"You know she is given up?" he said, in a low tone. He looked sad, and even gloomy.

"Given up!" echoed Edward Graham, slowly—"that seems hard."

He spoke in a cold, mechanical voice, almost as if he did not know what he was saying.

"Yes, poor young thing, it is hard. Such a lovely girl! Some die, and some come back to life. Is it true that William Lennard has turned up?"

"I saw him an hour ago," answered Mr. Graham.

Mr. Cowper laughed, but he looked ill at ease.

"Why did he not write all this time?" said he, gnawing

his fair mustache. "Uncle always said he would halve it between us. I counted upon it. I came to this hole of a place for that—I—I contracted liabilities even on the faith of Mr. Lennard's promise. Mr. Lennard thought him dead, and so did I. It is not fair to the living for the dead to appear again in that startling fashion, is it?"

"No," echoed Mr. Graham, "it is not fair."

"Does not put you out, I hope?" hinted Mr. Cowper.

"Oh, no!" answered Edward Graham, "it does not put me out."

They had long passed Mrs. Scot's house, and had reached the church of St. Anne. Its deep gates lay steeped in shadow, but the light of a young moon gently touched the wonderful carving, clear and dainty as lace, which rose above them.

"Going in there?" said Mr. Cowper, in a surprised tone, as he saw his companion suddenly stand still.

Yes, Mr. Graham was going in there, and with a cold "good-night" he parted from Mr. Cowper.

The church was lonely. A light burning before the altar lit it dimly. Edward Graham sank listlessly down on one of the benches, and, too inert for prayer, he let his soul fold its weary wings in the Divine Presence, like a bird of passage, who, worn by its long flight, had come to rest there awhile. He looked at the altar, where Lily Scot was to have stood by his side, and, though he thought that she might soon stand there, a pale, fair bride, by the side of William Lennard, the thought woke nothing in his heart. It did not even wound that sense of jealous pride which is almost the last feeling to die within us. William Lennard's look of hate, Mr. Cowper's all but open taunt, left him as cold, as dull. What did it matter?—what did anything matter now? The present and the future were both a dreary blank, and the past—what was the past?

Heavily, wearily he looked back upon his life, and laid it under that searching Eye—oh! well for us that it is so merciful!—to which our weaknesses, our follies, and our sins, are all revealed; and, as he uttered his *mea culpa* in that sad hour, the Eternal Light that saw through him so clearly seemed suddenly poured over the track of all his days. He saw now what he had never seen before, that a feeling of hate, indulged in from youth upward, had warped his whole

destiny. He had indulged in it, cherished it, hugged it close, and sacrificed almost all things to that abiding resentment of an early wrong. How small, how miserable, how pitiable it seemed now! A dying man is said to cast a look of mingled wonder and shame on the errors of his life. Their aspect is so different from that which they wore when they came to tempt him in the dangerous strength of his manhood. Was it for this he sinned?—was it for that he went through the fiery glow of passion, or let the cold waters of despair sweep over him? And a great trouble is so far like death that it causes us to look upon life with altered eyes. The shore we once stood on wears a changed aspect when we turn back and gaze at it drifting down the troubled stream, that ends in the sadness of death.

What was Richard Cowper, Mr. Graham now asked of himself, that he should have lavished upon him so deep and long a scorn, and in that scorn put so much of the vital energy needed for nobler feelings and purer emotions? The man had not seemed worth it as they walked side by side a few minutes ago. The man who could talk of her death and his liabilities, and the loss of Mr. Lennard's inheritance, almost in one breath—what was he? And oh! misery, misery!—he saw it as if it were written in lines of fire—it was to this feeling that every other feeling in his life had been made subject, on this base altar that its loveliness, its tenderness and beauty, had been slain. And, now, where was the remedy? Hate was dead, true, but in its grave lay buried the promises of life, love, and hope; and no *resurgam* could he ever write on that pitiless tombstone.

For some time the organist had been practising in the gallery above the church-door. The low, uncertain notes had floated through the quiet building with vague melody, but now the unseen musician suddenly struck into a dirge which sounded like the requiem of Edward Graham's past life, and pierced his very heart with grief. In this same church he had once cried over his hard lot with a young man's just and natural sorrow, and burying his face in his hands he now wept over the fatal sin of his life—the sin which had blighted his manhood.

Suddenly he started and rose. A little bell was tinkling. A priest, bearing the holy *ciborium* under a canopy, lights, and choristers, moved past him and left the church. He fol-

lowed mechanically out into the moonlit street, and went bareheaded after the little procession, till it reached the door of Mr. Bertram's house. Two women walked by his side, and one of them said to the other: "It is a pity; she was a pretty girl."

A great sickening came over him as he heard her. As he walked down the street, back to the Cité de Jérusalem, the black old houses on either side, and the church-steeples, and the moon in the sky, all reeled before him. He had battled long, but the blow had fallen at last. She was dying, and he loved her. Yes, Mr. Graham was ill and stricken. Yes, he was very ill, indeed, and the next morning, while the weary watchers stood around Lily's bed, wondering how many hours she would live, Mrs. Graham was crying by her nephew's bedside, and a doctor was shaking his head over him, and saying, ominously, "Fever, madame—fever, and a bad case—a bad case, but we will hope."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

It was a bad case and a slow one. Weary days were those that followed—days of watching for Mrs. Graham; of pain, unrest, and delirium, for the sick man, in which the one glimpse of consciousness that he possessed seemed only given to him that he might go through a keener agony than that which had laid him low. It came to him one morning when the sun shone in at his window, turning the faded curtains of his bed into burning orange, and lighting the sad face of his aunt as she bent forward to close the shutters.

"Aunt," he said, in a low, distinct voice.

"O Edward!" she cried, turning round quickly, "do you know me?" and she came toward him with eager joy.

"Yes, aunt," he answered, very calmly, "I know you. You have something to tell me, have you not?"

Mrs. Graham turned pale and looked scared.

"No, no," said she, clasping her hands, "not yet, Ned, not yet."

"Give it to me," he said, holding out his wasted hand, and looking eagerly at her.

"But, Ned, it is not time for your medicine," she argued.

"I do not mean the medicine, aunt, and you know it. I mean the will—her will. Give it to me."

He held out his hand again.

"Ned, I have no will."

"You cannot deceive me, aunt. I was awake when they brought it to you—you put it in that drawer," and he pointed to an old-fashioned *commode*. "It is in a long, yellow envelope, with a black seal. Give it to me, aunt, I am sensible now, and I want to read her will."

"Ned, I dare not."

"You must, auntie, you must."

He half rose as he spoke.

"Do not—do not," she entreated, and she went and opened the drawer and took out the yellow envelope and put it in his hand.

It was directed to himself. How pitiless and clear the letters of every word stood before his eyes as they were there written in the formal legal hand. He broke the seal, unfolded the inclosure, and tried to read, but his sight was weak and dim, and it was only here and there that he could catch a few words. They were more than sufficient.

"This is my last will and testament." Then he saw his name, "Edward Graham;" then came the bequest, "My house in Saint Aubin, known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold;" then his heart failed him. He uttered a great cry of anguish: "Dead! dead! dead!" and he saw and knew nothing more till he woke again to life many days later, calm, weak, and broken.

The first feeling that returned with consciousness was that he had been far away, and that it had all happened long ago. He also felt very feeble. He saw his aunt's kind face smiling through her tears, he saw her forefinger raised warningly, and he obeyed the sign and was silent till, with returning life, slowly but surely as the blood that flowed still languidly in his veins, came back the last cry of grief which had been on his lips: "Dead! dead! dead!"

"Oh! don't, Ned—pray, don't!" cried his aunt, beseechingly—"don't begin again!"

"Where is the will?" he asked.

"I will give it to you presently," she answered, tearfully; "but, pray, don't begin again."

He groaned aloud. Then it was true—he had not dreamed it. She was dead, dead in her grave, with the heavy earth above her bright face.

"Tell me all about it," he said, looking at his aunt.

"Pray, do not ask," she answered, her tears flowing—"I cannot, Ned—not yet—not yet. Indeed, I cannot!"

He was silent, and put no more questions. Where was the need? He knew all—he knew too much. His illness had been a long one, but his recovery was rapid. His vigorous constitution enabled him to pass swiftly from disease to convalescence, and he was soon allowed to get up and sit in the arm-chair for half an hour every day.

"Do not let him talk much," the doctor had said; "but try to interest him in bits of news or little gossip, if you can. Above all things, do not excite him."

Kind Mrs. Graham did her best.

"Every one has been inquiring about you," she said, one day, after settling him comfortably in his chair.

He was silent.

"Perhaps, you would like to know?" she pursued.

Still he spake not.

"Mrs. Scot came every day before they left, and—and they did not leave till you were out of danger."

No sign of emotion appeared on Mr. Graham's pale face. Mrs. Graham was relieved to find that he took this broad hint of Lily's departure so little to heart; but she also felt disappointed that he should be so passive under the news. She tried something else.

"Would you believe it, Ned, they say Captain Jekyll is going to marry Mrs. Petherick?"

Mr. Graham heard her with unmoved gravity.

"O Ned!" she could not help saying, in a voice full of sorrow, "will you never smile again?"

"I dare say not," he answered; "but what matter? one can live without smiling, you know."

Poor Mrs. Graham looked very doleful. She had had her sorrows, but she could still smile.

"I wish I could interest you in something," she said, rather plaintively.

His sunken eyes lit.

"Tell me," he began.

"No!. no!" cried Mrs. Graham, raising her hands and

looking alarmed; "not that, Ned. The doctor has forbidden it. Not yet," she added, entreatingly—"later you can know all, but not now."

He yielded. He seemed too inert to insist. He leaned back in his chair, shaded his eyes with his hand, and half closed his weary lids. Every day he slept so for a few minutes, and his aunt, thinking that he was sleeping, now softly moved away. But Mr. Graham was not sleeping. He sat with his back to the window and his face to the door. He looked at that door and remembered how he had felt the last time he crossed its threshold. She was dying, and he knew it, and that knowledge, and not, as the doctor said, the chill mist of a September evening, had poisoned his blood—that knowledge, and the long battle of wrath and injured love, and the proud man's struggle against them both, had laid him low. His poor aunt! How pitiful and disconsolate she looked as she stood there at the farther end of the room, gazing at him! She did not know, she could not understand; the time when she could do either was over, and she now saw the past through the dimness of age, with perplexed wonder in her kind face. He closed his eyes, not to sleep, but to think, also not to meet the look of her gentle, reproachful eyes.

"And so you are dead, my darling," he thought, "dead and buried. You, so young, are gone, and I must stay behind, and feel strong, and live years and years after you! Your pretty blooming face has vanished, and you loved me! And I was blind, blind with hate and jealousy, and never saw it till now, when it is too late forever. What shall I do with your house, my darling? Shall I live in it, to be haunted by the step of your little feet on the stairs, by your bright face at every door and window? Ah! no; not without you—not without you. Let that house be closed forever, and be as the grave of love, since you are gone."

"Ned," softly whispered Mrs. Graham, "are you asleep?"

He did not answer. He could not. He felt that his voice would assuredly fail him if he made the attempt. Mrs. Graham, thinking him asleep, as usual, moved away softly on tiptoe, and went to the door. She opened it gently and cautiously, till he felt the draught from the stairs on his face; then, after a pause, a murmur of voices followed. Was he asleep, or dreaming?

"How is he?" asked a low voice.

"Much the same," answered Mrs. Graham, in tones equally low.

With a wild thrill of joy at his heart he opened his eyes and looked. The door stood ajar, and in the opening Lily Bertram's blooming face was gazing in at him. Their eyes met, and at once the bright vision vanished.

"Lily!—Lily!" he cried, starting up to his feet.

"Edward, what is it?" said Mrs. Graham, turning round, and hurrying up to him. "What is it, Ned? And, oh! pray, don't!" she added, entreatingly.

"Lily, where are you?" he cried, without heeding her. "Lily, living or dead, come to me."

The door opened very softly and very little. In the slit a smiling and tearful face peeped in, then vanished, then came again; then the door opened wider, and Lily slipped in like a bird getting out of its cage, and stood before him.

"Not dead, but living, Mr. Graham," said she.

"Oh! my dear," cried Mrs. Graham, wringing her hands, "what will the doctor say?"

They did not heed her. They looked at each other with clasped hands and happy, tearful eyes; they were indeed far beyond the region where doctors and their decrees are heeded.

And joy, or rather the surprise of joy, which the doctor had dreaded, did not kill Mr. Graham. There was a shock, and a severe one, but no real relapse. Mrs. Graham, who hated what she called make-believe, was much relieved at the discovery.

"And you are not angry with me, Ned?" said she, pathetically. "But you had got hold of the unfortunate idea that dear Lily was dead, and had made her will, and there was no gettting it out of you, and the doctor said I was to wait till you were strong enough to bear it; and so she came and peeped in at you, and you found it all out." And then, with her incorrigible frankness, "I suppose you will build the turret now?" added she.

Of course, Mr. Graham built the turret, and, of course, it stands there now, a memorial of the bitter past, and a sign of the happy present!

THE END.

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